



780.92 S187  
~~92~~ ~~S187~~

---

## Keep Your Card in This Pocket

---

Books will be issued only on presentation of proper library cards.

Unless labeled otherwise, books may be retained for four weeks. Borrowers finding books marked, defaced or mutilated are expected to report same at library desk; otherwise the last borrower will be held responsible for all imperfections discovered.

The card holder is responsible for all books drawn on this card.

Penalty for over-due books 2c a day plus cost of notices.

Lost cards and change of residence must be reported promptly.



**Public Library**  
**Kansas City, Mo.**

---

## Keep Your Card in This Pocket

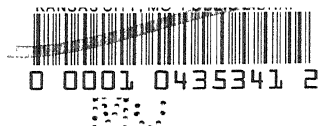
---

BERKOWITZ ENVELOPE CO., K. C., MO.









AN  
AMERICAN MUSICIAN'S STORY



*Books by Olga Samaroff Stokowski*

AN AMERICAN MUSICIAN'S STORY

THE LAYMAN'S MUSIC BOOK

THE MAGIC WORLD OF MUSIC

A MUSIC MANUAL

*Olga Samaroff Stokowski*

---


AN  
AMERICAN  
MUSICIAN'S  
STORY

---

*New York* · W · W · NORTON & COMPANY · INC ·

COPYRIGHT, 1939, BY  
W. W. NORTON & COMPANY, INC.  
70 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY

*First Edition*

  
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
FOR THE PUBLISHERS BY THE VAIL-BALLOU PRESS

6.8.00

TO

MARIA DEHON POLK

*with deep gratitude for all that her  
friendship has meant throughout  
the years.*





# CONTENTS

---

I.	THE ASPIRING YOUNG AMERICAN MUSICIAN	11
II.	BEGINNING A MUSICAL CAREER	29
III.	MUSICAL DEBUTS ON TWO CONTINENTS	40
IV.	SOME ASPECTS OF LIFE ON THE CONCERT STAGE	56
V.	BEHIND THE SCENES OF AN AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA	87
VI.	MAKING PHONOGRAPH RECORDS	107
VII.	OFFSTAGE AT THE OPERA HOUSE	121
VIII.	MUSIC AND THE WORLD WAR	139
IX.	THE "PEACE CONFERENCE OF AMSTERDAM": HOL- LAND HONORS MAHLER AND MENGELBERG	157
X.	POST-WAR MUSICAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES	170
XI.	THE LIFE OF A MUSIC CRITIC IN NEW YORK	210
XII.	THE SCHUBERT MEMORIAL: AN ATTACK ON NA- TIONAL PREJUDICES	231
XIII.	CREATING AUDIENCES OF ACTIVE LISTENERS	251
XIV.	THE INTERNATIONAL MUSIC EDUCATION CONGRESS IN PRAGUE IN 1936	272

XV.	A QUEEN CREATES OPPORTUNITY: THE CONCOURS EUGÈNE YSAÏE IN BRUSSELS	283
XVI.	TRACING THE PATTERN OF MUSICAL DESTINY: OB- SERVATION AT CLOSE RANGE	301

## ILLUSTRATIONS

---

	FACING PAGE
Author's Maternal Grandmother and First Piano Teacher	14
Statue of General Andrew Hickenlooper	14
Author's Mother and Father	15
As a Student at the Paris <i>Conservatoire de Musique</i>	30
Miss Dehon	46
Early Photograph, Showing Result of Photographer's Demand for Smiles	62
Caricature of Musical Artists	78
Leopold Stokowski at the Time of His Marriage to the Author	94
Members of Musical Colony, Seal Harbor, Maine	142
Author with Group of Her Piano Students, Seal Harbor	190
A Tribute to Bach	190
Marcella Sembrich Welcoming Sonya Stokowski to America	206
The Last Scene of "Tristan and Isolde"	209

	FACING PAGE
Miss Harriett Johnson, Artistic Director of the Layman's Music Courses	254
Layman's Music Course Class at the David Mannes Music School	254
Permanent Exhibition of Prague Society for Music Educa- tion	270
The Twelve Prize-Winners of the First "Concours Eugène Ysaÿe"	286
Rehearsal for Benefit of Musicians' Emergency Fund	316
At the Ernest Schelling château on Lake of Geneva, 1912	316

## FOREWORD

---

THE WRITING of this book may be attributed to the fact that the publisher was more obstinate than the author. The friendly controversy in the course of which my publisher insisted that I should write the story of my life, while I was equally determined not to do so, extended over a period of two years.

My own obstinacy resulted from my conviction that I lacked two requisites of the autobiographer, namely, a confidence in the potential interest of the reader and a willingness publicly to discuss the more intimate aspects of private life.

It was not until one day when I was re-reading Burney's description of his musical experiences in the eighteenth century that the peculiar flavor of this personal narrative—so difficult for a historian to capture—made me understand what it was that my patient (and obstinate) publisher asked of me.

I thereupon set out to write this book in which, quite simply, I try to share with my readers the rather curious opportunity I have had to learn to know various phases of the musical life of my time. As a concert pianist I was on the stage myself; as the wife of an orchestra conductor I was an observer at close range behind the scenes; as music critic of the *New York Evening Post* I viewed and reviewed the musical scene from the other side of the footlights; while as educator and adviser of important musical insti-

tutions I have been obliged to try to understand things that lie outside the usual activities of the individual musician.

In writing such a book one learns that even though the experience of the individual musician may be scarcely worth recording, the *significance* of such experiences gives a clue to the gradually unfolding destiny of a great art.

Important changes have taken place during the years of which I write. The influence upon music of the World War, the phonograph, the radio, and general life conditions of the twentieth century has been so vast that volumes could be written—and doubtless will be written—about each of these factors in a new order of things. They are discussed in this book only as they were observed or experienced in the everyday life of an American musician.

*Olga Samaroff Stokowski*

# 1

## THE ASPIRING YOUNG AMERICAN MUSICIAN

---

"HAVE YOU ever studied counterpoint and fugue?" The question was not asked with perfunctory curiosity. It was obviously thrown into the conversation as an important issue. The speaker was a small but resolute lady who faced her opponent in argument with the courage of unshakable conviction.

The opponent, my father's cousin, General Andrew Hickenlooper of Cincinnati, Ohio, who occupied somewhat of a "head of the family" position among us, was debating my future education with my maternal grandmother. We had stopped in Cincinnati for this special purpose on our way to Galveston, Texas, after a summer vacation in the North. The General little knew how much of a skeleton in the closet he had been during my early childhood. In the 1890's Yankees were still anathema in the minds of most Southerners. It was no joke for a little girl in the South to have to admit the existence of a Yankee General among her relations, and I well remember the dreadful day when my most intimate friend found General Hickenlooper's name in the account of some Civil War battle and taxed me with it.

But despite this and the fact that he had been associated with the arch-fiend Sherman in the Civil War, I shared the family's affection for kindly "Cousin Andrew." Neither he nor my grandmother paid any attention to my presence, and although I was not yet twelve I understood and remembered their conversation. My grandmother's unexpected question followed the General's assertion that I should prepare for a college education if only for the mental discipline of Latin and higher mathematics. His own daughters had been sent to Wellesley.

When the General, somewhat discomfited, had admitted his complete ignorance of counterpoint and fugue, my grandmother continued, undaunted by the respect we all had for his opinion:

"Anyone who really studies music seriously and completely, *must* acquire mental discipline. If you had ever studied counterpoint and fugue, you would realize what I mean. They *are* mathematics and I see no reason why French or German is not just as beneficial to the mind as the study of Latin. I would not exchange my proficiency in German and French for all the dead languages in the world!"

The debate was caused by the necessity of deciding whether or not I should be sent to Europe to study music. The General, holding advanced views, was in favor of college first and music afterwards. My case may be regarded as typical of the American child who gave evidence of pronounced musical talent shortly before the turn of the century. A brief glance at the typically American background of this case throws a light on the national psychology of several generations in this country regarding music, musicians and musical education.

The prevailing spirit of adventure in the 1840's had sent my maternal grandmother's father, Dr. Eugene Palmer of Stoning-



ton, Connecticut, from the home his forbears had inhabited for more than a hundred and fifty years to Louisiana in quest of wider opportunity. There he bought a plantation on the banks of the Mississippi, and in the dual capacity of planter and physician he rapidly doubled and trebled the modest inheritance with which he had begun life. He finally amassed a comfortable fortune which enabled him to maintain his family in all the state of pre-Civil War plantation life in the South. His daughters (my grandmother and her two sisters) received a thoroughly French education in a near-by Sacred Heart Convent. Throughout her life my grandmother never added a column of figures nor said her prayers in anything but French, which she spoke and wrote with more freedom and elegance than English.

Her musical education was placed in the hands of French musicians from New Orleans who made regular trips up and down the Mississippi River for the purpose of teaching music to the young ladies on the plantations. Most of these young ladies regarded music as an accomplishment of minor importance and seldom progressed far beyond the performance of an easy piano piece by Gottschalk. It may be imagined how the bored teachers took fire when they encountered a child with real talent and capacity for work. Little Lucie Palmer, my grandmother, not only had talent but a very unusual pianistic facility. Her teachers reveled in her progress and she finally distinguished herself at the age of fifteen by playing a Beethoven concerto with the orchestra of the French Opera at a charity concert in New Orleans.

According to her own account she was so nervous at the preliminary rehearsal that her little feet (she wore a number three shoe) never found the pedals at all! According to other members of the family, she scored a triumph at the concert.

Among other things the evening brought her the conquest of my grandfather, George Loening of Bremen, Germany, who was in New Orleans on business, and she married him the following year at the age of sixteen. In spite of her pronounced talent and her fine playing, no thought of a professional career had ever entered her head or those of her parents. Mayflower ancestors and southern traditions combined to place her among the women for whom at that time matrimony was the only desirable career. The stage, even the concert stage, was a dangerous and indecorous place quite beyond the pale for ladies of any social standing.

My German grandfather took his bride to Europe and among her happiest recollections was a sojourn in Munich during which she often played for music-loving Ludwig I, of Bavaria, who had already abdicated but still spent much time in the Bavarian capital.

At the end of the Civil War which brought financial ruin to the family, the untimely death of her husband had left my grandmother, then twenty-two years of age, a penniless widow with two little children to support, and under these circumstances she paid dearly for the prejudices of her day. Instead of pursuing the more interesting and lucrative career of a concert pianist, which in her case might have been highly successful, she was doomed to the drudgery of giving piano lessons for the pitiful fees obtainable in the impoverished South, first in New Orleans and then, after a second marriage which brought her no economic security, in Houston and Galveston, Texas. A realization of what the circumstances of her life had meant and memories of her happy experiences in Europe gave her the determination to overcome every obstacle to a complete develop-



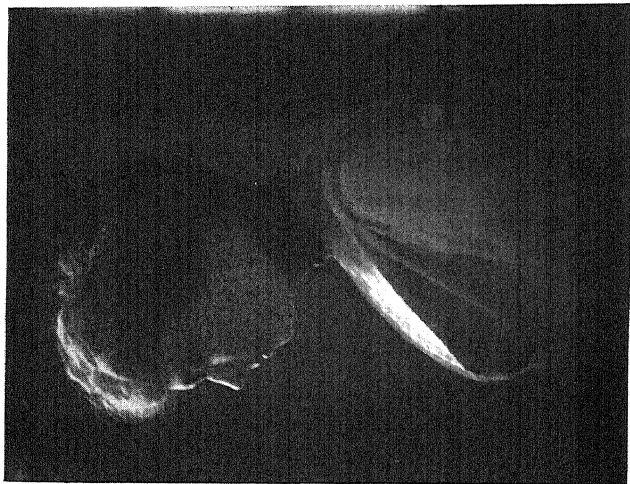
*Maternal grandmother and first piano teacher of the author, Lucie Palmer, first married to the author's grandfather, George Loening, and after his death to Lorenzo Grunewald.*



*"It was no joke for a little girl in the South to have to admit the existence of a Yankee General among her relations. . . ." Statue of General Andrew Hickenlooper erected in Vicksburg, Mississippi, after the Civil War.*



*Carols Hickenlooper, a young father who consented to the long separation from his daughter incidental to the pre-war necessity of musical education in Europe for American students preparing for a professional career.*



*"My attractive mother had everybody connected with my career wrapped around her little finger."*

ment of the musical talent I showed at an early age. But it is interesting to note that both she and my mother retained much of the old psychology regarding public careers for women. I was brought up with the idea that I should fit myself for a public career but only undertake it "if I had to." This meant in plain English that if no stalwart male were at hand to relieve me of the necessity of making my living I might play in concerts and should be thoroughly prepared to do so, but there would be no question if I had the choice between matrimony and a career—I should marry!

Undoubtedly this was a more or less universal psychology in the United States of those days, perhaps even more pronounced in the South than in the North, but existing everywhere among those who laid claim to being considered "ladies and gentlemen" in our land of theoretical democracy and actual class distinction.

Even for men in the same walk of life a musical career was considered highly undesirable. Music occupied a scant place in the education of American boys. It was deemed an unmanly pursuit. There were doubtless many exceptions, but in general the music-makers of the nineteenth century in the United States were either foreigners imported for professional activities, or American amateurs who had preserved intact the habits and customs of their European ancestry and kept them alive through chamber music in the home, or through such organizations as the German singing societies that were to be found wherever there was a population of German descent. Artistic institutions, such as the French Opera in New Orleans and the orchestras that had begun to take root on American soil, employed mostly foreign musicians. So did the opera in New York. By the end of the

nineteenth century the imported concert and opera activity had become a great industry.

The importation of European musicians, at first a necessity because American settlers so seldom devoted themselves professionally to music, had by this time become a tradition. Impresarios bent on the largest possible profits made a regular practice of importing musical celebrities whose renown in Europe insured their success in America. The United States had ceased to be a colony politically, but not musically. The latest sensations in the European musical world almost invariably found their way to our shores, preceded by an intensive publicity campaign. On the whole, a great deal was gained in this way. The New World heard most of the Old World's great artists. High standards of concert and opera performances were created and maintained. America paid well and bought the acknowledged best.

The chief loser was the native musician. America's musical dependence on Europe had created a deep-rooted national inferiority complex that was reflected in the attitude of Americans and foreigners alike. It was inevitable that this complex governed the policies of those who sought commercial domination of the rich musical field in the United States. It was forgotten that all "Americans" were, racially speaking, transplanted Europeans. It was forgotten that these Europeans, whether recent arrivals or several generations removed from their mother countries, had brought with them the musical heritage of the European lands from which they came. It was generally assumed that the American musician was inevitably inferior to the European. Nobody had the patience to listen to a young native artist in the making. Our audiences in the large cities

were intolerant of anything immature or unknown. The demand for "the best" and the willingness to pay for it provided a vast market for the recognized artist at the height of his maturity, but also created a kind of musical snobbishness that choked the growth of an independent native musical life. The habit of listening to renowned musicians at the height of their maturity produced an exacting public taste, but one that was restricted because it lacked the spirit of adventure and the exercise of independent discrimination which is completely called upon only when the listener faces an unknown quantity.

The best chance for the American musician who aspired to a professional concert or opera career lay in acquiring a European education and reputation. This state of affairs automatically eliminated those who were unable to raise the necessary funds for the undertaking. It was so much the accepted thing for the American child of outstanding talent to be educated in Europe that no one even suggested an alternative. I was taken to play for Edward MacDowell, for de Pachmann, for William Steinway, then head of the famous firm of piano manufacturers, and before other authorities. One and all said "send her to Europe," so after family conferences with General Hickenlooper and other relations it was decided that I should go, accompanied by my grandmother, for I was much too young to go alone.

The reader must not imagine that the United States lacked opportunity for the study of music. There were already excellent music schools in various large cities, as well as individual teachers of outstanding ability. But European prestige was so important that even after practically completing their musical studies in the United States, aspirants for a public career usually betook themselves to Europe where, after a little coaching with

a famous pedagogue (sometimes only for a few months), they would make a European debut and return to this country as "a pupil of" the foreign celebrity.

The decision to take me to Europe meant that I would not see my father for five years nor my mother for the same length of time except for part of one year which she spent with us overseas. It meant that my grandmother sacrificed her own piano class which represented her sole possibility of earning money and saving something for her old age.

I have often wondered how many similar sacrifices were made in those days by American families! And how futile most of them were, for even a European education and a successful foreign debut did not entirely destroy the professional handicap of being a native American. The American musician lacked glamour for his compatriots. The unrestricted enthusiasm of American audiences as a rule was reserved for the European who, besides being a good artist, had a glamorous foreign personality, a piquant accent, and an appropriate foreign name that lent itself to being used without any handle of Mr., Mrs., or Miss. It was one thing to say "Nordica" and quite another to talk about "Norton." Just as the animal of a certain breed has his points, so the musical artist of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was supposed to exhibit certain characteristics associated with the successful European virtuosos and prima donnas of the period. It is no reflection upon Mr. Paderewski's superb art to wonder if his box-office success would have been quite as great if, while playing the piano just as wonderfully, he had been a Mr. John Doe from Emporia, Kansas, and worn his hair cropped short. Probably he would never have been heard by the same audiences that acclaimed the Polish virtuoso.



The fact that Europeans shared the low American estimate of American talent was brought home to me on the day of my first lesson at the Paris Conservatoire de Musique. Notwithstanding the fact that Leschetizky was the fashionable piano pedagogue of the day in Europe, my grandmother had taken me straight to Paris. For her, Paris meant music. Her own experience had taught her to regard the Conservatoire de Paris as the *ne plus ultra* in musical education. Accordingly, after a year of preparation with Marmontel (then in his eighties) and Ludovic Breitner, I entered the contest for a scholarship in the famous institution in the rue du Faubourg Poissonnière. I almost missed my chance of entering it because the French doorman who called the contestants in turn to take their examination was incapable of pronouncing my name—Hickenlooper. In his struggle with it he arrived at something that sounded like "Klomp-pare." I naturally did not respond. He had shouted himself hoarse and was about to abandon all effort to summon the missing contestant, when I suddenly realized that as the names were being called in alphabetical order, an H should precede a K.

I timidly approached the despairing functionary and reminded him that I was an "H." "*Ab, c'est vous, cela!*" he cried indignantly, mopping his brow with savage energy. "*Comment peut-on avoir un nom comme cela! nom de Dieu!*" If he had dared I am sure he would have refused me admittance "with a name like that," just as a New York manager several years later flatly declined to place me on his list of artists unless I changed it! Nevertheless, I was allowed to enter the contest and won my scholarship.

I was placed in the class of the eccentric Delaborde, a strange being with a great beard, shaggy hair, short legs and a rolling

gait, who looked more like a bear than any man I ever beheld. He greeted me at my first lesson with the words: "You are an American, are you? Why do you try to play the piano? Americans are not meant to be musicians!" \* He then gruffly ordered me to play for him and while I did so he restlessly beat time with his foot upon a little wooden footstool, muttering to himself a sort of running commentary on Americans and their lack of musical talent.

That experience made an indelible impression upon me. It was the first injustice I had encountered in life. The room was bare and cold. On benches around the walls sat other members of the class with their mothers or chaperones. Among the latter was my grandmother, beside herself with surprise and indignation. She and I talked far into the night in our little room at the Convent of the Holy Sacrament in the Avenue Malakoff, where we had established ourselves in the wing reserved for lady boarders. The convent school, where I followed academic classes as far as five or six hours of piano practice permitted, was across the garden. My grandmother was inclined to take me away at once, but I was determined to remain because my scholarship gave me free tuition and I knew what that meant to my family.

For several weeks Delaborde was harsh and disagreeable. The more he found fault, the harder I worked. Finally, one day, I suddenly became angry and attacked the G Minor Sonata of Schumann with tempestuous ardor. He let me play through the whole first movement without interruption. Then he said: "Where did you get the name Hickenlooper?" I told him my

\* I was the first American girl to win a scholarship in the piano classes of the Paris Conservatoire de Musique.

father's people came from Holland. Then he inquired about the racial background of my mother. Finally, when he had a fairly complete picture of my mixed ancestry, he said: "But you are not American at all! You are a European by blood. And you have no more mixture of nationalities than the European royal families with all their intermarriages. I never thought of that before! If it were not true, you could never play the Schumann sonata as you did just now. I see it all now. You are just coming out of your shell." After that, his attitude changed entirely, he gave me the pet name of "Bambola," and tried in every way to show interest in my work. As time went on, I became the favorite pupil in his class, but try as I would I could never quite banish the memory of his ruthless reception of "L'Américaine." I dutifully called upon him when I made my Paris debut several years later with the Colonne Orchestra, but inwardly I knew I still could not give him the respect and confidence he lost when he asserted "Americans are not meant to be musicians." He told me frankly it had always been his conviction that the inhabitants of the United States were unmusical. He had no experience to account for this conviction. He just had it.

The truth is that most European musicians shared his conviction, but they rarely said so to Americans. It was not tactful in polite conversation, and teachers in all countries, including those in the United States, are not prone to discourage students who represent their main source of income. Delaborde, however, received his salary as professor at the Paris Conservatoire from the French government. All the students in the school were there on a full scholarship basis. They were educated at the expense of the French government. If students left a class it was

their loss. Delaborde could afford to be perfectly frank, and he was!

Doubtless the great majority of American music students who flocked to the various European capitals in those days actually had little or no real talent, but the same thing is true of countless European music students. Outstanding talent is rare at all times and in all countries. Not one of my eleven classmates at the Paris Conservatoire made anything of a career on the concert stage. They eventually joined the army of "*Elèves du Conservatoire de Paris*" that is to be found in every side street of Paris and in every corner of the provinces. This army supplies music teachers for France.

The Conservatoire was a rigorous and thorough school. I am grateful for the musical knowledge and discipline it gave me. Also for the capacity for work developed by its unrelenting demands. The class of twelve was divided into two groups. Each group had piano lessons every five days, alternating on Tuesday and Saturday of one week and Thursday of the next. Only two foreigners were admitted to a class. A Russian girl and I shared the privilege in Delaborde's class. The amount of work we were supposed to accomplish between lessons was staggering. The nature of my daily schedule gives an idea of what serious musical education meant in those days. Between the piano and theoretical branches I worked about seven hours a day at music, besides four or five at academic subjects. My day began at seven in the morning and ended at ten in the evening. In the course of it I had just one free hour outside of meals. In good weather I spent this hour on a bicycle, racing along the lovely cycling paths of the Bois de Boulogne with an English lady who occupied the room next to ours in the convent. This

proceeding rather dismayed the good nuns and we had to keep our bicycles in a little shop around the corner. Sports played no part in convent life and it took a conspiracy between my grandmother and a nice old physician to obtain the necessary permission for my bicycle excursions. Our chief exercise in the regular course of school life was to walk about the garden, and twice a week we promenaded two by two in the Bois de Boulogne, decorously accompanied by four or five nuns. It may be imagined how an American child, accustomed to various outdoor sport activities such as tennis and other games, reveled in the comparative freedom of cycling, and I can still seem to smell the freshness of the Bois on early spring mornings as we flew along the shaded bicycle paths towards Armenonville and other delightful places.

In retrospect the chief advantage of studying music at the Conservatoire de Paris was the acquisition of artistic self-discipline in an atmosphere of intensive work. The average young American of my generation had no conception of the kind and amount of effort involved in mastering the art of music. The amount of time spent on relaxation and entertainment by the youth of America precluded the possibility of such an effort. Europeans of the same age had different ideas of life. They met the stern demands of their educators without demur. Once in Europe most Americans fell into line, although some of them frittered away their time and accomplished little or nothing.

The majority of the American music students in Paris were studying singing. They usually lived in cheap pensions or with private families, striving desperately to learn the language, acquire good diction and make their way into some opera house. Many were the tales told of the methods by which engage-

ments in the latter were procured. If these stories were true, the old prejudice against the stage for girls of refinement was not entirely unreasonable.

While a few Americans succeeded in opera, no one knows what became of the rest. Many a tragedy overtook young musical aspirants from the New World who found defeat in the Old. A case in point was that of a young girl from Iowa who had come to Paris with high hopes, a lovely natural voice and a small fund of borrowed money. We first heard her sing in the salon of an American lady who bore a papal title of *Marquise*. My grandmother at once realized that the girl's naturally fine voice was nearly ruined by an impossible vocal method. She urged the Marquise to investigate and it was found that the young Iowan had fallen into the hands of a charlatan singing teacher whose demands soon exhausted her resources. He then induced her to remain in Paris as his mistress rather than confess her plight to her people at home. When he had tired of her she found herself penniless in the streets of Paris. She wisely went to the American Consul, who managed to obtain temporary relief and procure some engagements for her to sing in various salons. I shall never forget the day when she came to the convent and told her whole story to my grandmother. Kind members of the American colony raised enough money to pay her passage to America, but her voice was ruined and her courage gone. She disappeared from the deck of the steamer the night before it landed in New York. It would be a revealing document if the human history of those days of the American migration to Europe for the study of music could be adequately known and recorded.

In Berlin, where I studied after leaving Paris, the majority

of American music students were composers or instrumentalists. On the whole, conditions were better than in Paris. It would have been difficult for Americans to fall into the hands of a musical charlatan in Berlin, or rather let us put it another way, it would have been difficult for a musical charlatan to thrive in the German capital. The American music student colony in Berlin was well organized, and Consul General Mason and his charming wife took a lively interest in the welfare of their young compatriots. There were many clean, comfortable pensions where the atmosphere was wholesome and the food good. My grandmother and I found a real home with "Tantchen" von Homeyer in the Potsdamer Strasse. The pension was in a typical old-fashioned Berlin apartment with high ceilings and porcelain stoves. No steam heat has ever made anybody more comfortable than did those stoves, properly tended, but they demanded an amount of time and work against which servants today would balk. At that time, however, conditions were very different. A cook, a housemaid and "Tantchen" von Homeyer herself did all the work for twelve people in our pension, including attention to a porcelain stove in every room. The latter not only required upkeep of the fire but a careful counting of the "briquettes" used, for we literally paid for our heat by the inch! And yet everyone seemed content and everything was cheerful. We ate all day long at short intervals, first breakfast, second breakfast (about eleven), midday dinner, afternoon coffee, supper and a snack before going to bed. All this was provided for about fifty dollars a month including a small but comfortable room. Larger quarters naturally cost more. The handsome front rooms were inhabited by the singer, Baroness Clara Senfft von Pilsach, a pupil of Frau Joachim and a sister

of Baroness Irmgart Senfft von Pilsach who later married Ernest Hutcheson. "Tante Clara," as we younger members of the pension household called her, was much admired and beloved. She brought endless interest into life because of the distinguished musicians that came to her salon. We were sometimes allowed to meet them. Tantchen von Homeyer was also of noble birth and had aristocratic connections, especially in army circles. Every once in a while some dashing Hussar or Dragoon cousin with a bristling upturned mustache would arrive in a gay and colorful uniform to set our hearts aflutter.

The number of good concerts and operatic performances available at low prices, the general atmosphere of hard work and the prevailing thoroughness, made music study in the Berlin of those days extremely valuable to all serious students. The prevalent European approach to attendance at the opera and at concerts was significant and salutary for the American students. When we obtained the lists of events for the coming week, we scanned programs and based our choice upon music itself. For instance, we would decide upon hearing *Fidelio* at the opera, regardless of who was singing. This is just the reverse of the American attitude, according to which most people have always rushed to hear the favorite artists of the day without caring very much what they sing or play.

There were naturally favorites among artists in Berlin. I confess to a *Backfisch Schwärmerei* for Nikisch, but if Weingartner's program of the week interested me more and I could not afford to hear both, I went to Weingartner's concert. The fact is that while the difference between good, better and best is inevitable at all times and in all countries, the European's favorable response to *adequate* performances—performances



good enough to give him the desired experience of the music—has made for a saner and richer musical life than ours, which can be so easily upset by the exaggerated hero-worship of certain performers. The European is just as quick to recognize and enjoy the superlative artist, but his tradition has been to put the emphasis on music itself.

One bad feature of Berlin musical life before the World War was the traffic in debut concerts. At that time a successful debut for instrumentalists in Berlin or Vienna meant more to the world in general and Americans in particular than anything else. For this reason both cities witnessed each season an endless succession of debut concerts, most of which were given (and heavily paid for) by Americans. They constituted a sort of forlorn ritual marking the end of student days and the beginning of something as unpredictable as the Day of Judgment. An audience of good-natured "dead-heads" gathered for these events, and glowing cablegrams that described an overwhelming success were usually sent to the home town before the sobering influence of the press reviews dampened the ardor of the concert-giver and his friends the next day. The foreign correspondents of American music magazines were naturally at hand to solicit proper advertising of the affair at home. Such advertising, done to any effective degree, was costly.

On the whole the Berlin critics were lenient with the musical fledglings. The most cruel review I remember reading was the line: "Mr. X gave a concert in the Sing Akademie. Why?"

I have known the New York critics to do worse.

Usually there were some crumbs of praise to be picked out of the reviews and enlarged in expensive advertisements. The great trouble was that these concerts and the advertising of them

usually represented the last financial gasp of the musical aspirant and his family, if not a heavy burden of debt. I remember one tall blond girl from Alabama who had announced her debut recital as violinist. She did not live in our pension, but came in one day for tea. As she entered the dining-room she fell forward in a dead faint. We afterwards learned that she had been denying herself food in order to give her concert.

After several years of piano study with Ernst Jedliczka and Ernest Hutcheson, whose lessons remain an unforgettable experience, as well as composition with Boise, my grandmother was seriously considering ways and means to launch me before the public as a pianist in Berlin when fate brought about a situation in which, despite extreme youth, I faced the necessity of a choice between a career and matrimony. True to the psychology of my upbringing, I chose matrimony and became a subject of Czar Nicholas the Second through my marriage to Boris Loutzky, a Russian inventor and civil engineer unofficially attached (as a technical expert supervising the construction of Russian warships at Kiel) to the Russian Embassy in Berlin. It was not until three and a half years later, after the annulment of this early marriage, that I finally made my debut as a concert pianist under circumstances very different from those I have described.

## 2

### BEGINNING A MUSICAL CAREER

---

DURING THE years of my marriage with Boris Loutzky, spent partly in Berlin and partly in Petrograd, all thought of playing in public concerts was abandoned. I was thrown into an environment so lacking in any connection with serious music that I have never been able—since this experience—to subscribe to the American belief that all Europeans have musical tastes and cultivate the art as amateurs in their homes. Diplomats, naval and army officers, government officials, civil engineers, scientists and business men, came and went in my salon. Most of them had no interest whatsoever in music. Sometimes their wives were willing to go to concerts with me, and occasionally I would encounter a talented amateur musician such as a young Russian, Prince Tenischeff, with whom I played on two pianos; but in general the official world in Berlin, as in Petrograd, was not very much more musically inclined than corresponding circles in Washington today.

Only through my friendship with Geraldine Farrar, discussed in another chapter, and a few stray musician friends did I

retain any connection with the life for which I had been so strenuously prepared, and it was almost with the sensation of waking up from a dream that I found myself in New York at the end of three and a half years facing a new life and the possibility of a concert career. I had just four hundred dollars in the world and no prospect of anything more, for in obtaining a divorce I asked for no alimony. In addition to my legal divorce, my marriage was annulled by the Pope; therefore, according to my way of thinking, there could be no question of accepting support from my former husband. Members of my immediate family were unable to do more than offer me shelter in St. Louis, where they had taken refuge after losing nearly everything they had in the Galveston flood.

It was in September, 1904, that I walked into the office of Henry Wolfsohn, then the leading New York concert manager, and asked to see him. I had determined to try my luck on the concert stage. The only alternative was teaching music for a few dollars an hour in St. Louis. It was not easy to see Mr. Wolfsohn but I finally succeeded in penetrating to his private office. Hardly were the words "I am a pianist" out of my mouth before he said, "Let me see your *European* press notices." When I told him I had none, and asked to play for him, he said: "My dear young lady, if you played like Liszt and Rubinstein rolled into one I could do nothing for you in this country without European prestige. Now, you go and give some concerts in Europe and if the reviews are good, come back and see me. It isn't what *I* think of your playing, but *what Europe thinks of it that counts.*" I explained to him that I had just come from Europe and had no money to go back there. At that point he began to look at his watch and I realized the interview was at



*The author as a student at the Paris Conservatoire de Musique.*



an end. Before leaving I asked a straight question, "Do you mean that it is impossible to begin a musical career in this country without first succeeding in Europe?" He looked at me as if I had asked whether summer succeeds spring, and said, "I would like you to show me a really successful pianist who has! Certainly I would never hope to book an artist in the 'big field' without some European reputation. You can pay for a recital here and give one if you like. It is done, but nothing much results from such concerts and if you are hard up, I certainly would not advise it." Such was the expressed conviction of the leading concert manager of New York in the autumn of 1904.

My mother had come to New York to meet my steamer. We shared a dismal little room on a dark court at the St. Hubert Hotel near Carnegie Hall. While I went to see Wolfsohn, Mother had been preparing an economical *pot-au-feu* on a chafing dish which we carefully hid from the chambermaid after finishing our frugal repast. New York, vast, stony and indifferent, chilled us both as we aimlessly walked the streets discussing the visit to Wolfsohn and the next move. Mother was in favor of going at once to St. Louis where she had already made new friends. She believed I could earn my living there as a teacher; but I was haunted by the thought of all the sacrifices my family had made for my education. It seemed out of the question to renounce all possibility of a concert career without making a more determined effort to justify what had been done for me. It was this feeling rather than personal ambition that formed the basis of my subsequent actions.

Whether because of the psychology of my education or of fundamental qualities of character, I never craved public performance as most artists do. That is the principal reason why, in

later life, after an accident had temporarily interrupted my public career, I could never be induced—in spite of tempting offers—to return to the concert stage. To me music always was (and still is) one thing, and public performance before people who have bought tickets and sit in rows of stiff chairs quite another. This point of view amounted to an obsession with me, for I had always been able to have a satisfying musical life without public performance. Furthermore, even after I had won success as a concert pianist I disliked certain commercial aspects of professionalism as well as incessant wandering about and other inescapable features of public life. But at the turning point which I have just described, the circumstances of my education gave me a grim determination to try to do what I had been fitted to do and succeed as far as possible. These thoughts had just been clarified as our aimless peregrinations brought us to Union Square.

Suddenly I was seized with an uncontrollable longing to get a piano under my fingers, for music itself was a passion with me. I dragged my somewhat unwilling mother to Steinway Hall, then on Fourteenth Street, and proceeded to inquire about renting a Steinway grand. I was told I could have an upright, but that there was no grand piano for rent. Tears had been very near ever since the interview with Wolfsohn, and now they began to flow. Mr. Stetson, a partner of the Steinway firm and one of the kindest and most warm-hearted men imaginable, happened to pass by just at the crucial moment. He inquired whether he could do anything for me, and after I had sobbed out my story he asked me to come into the next room and play for him. I played, feeling as though all life hung in the balance, and as a matter of fact it did, because Wolfsohn, who had



come in to see Mr. Stetson on business, stood outside in the corridor and heard me. When I had finished he joined us, and, adopting a very different tone from the one he had used in the morning, made an appointment to see me the following day. Mr. Stetson promised to send a grand piano to the hotel and I began to feel as though the tide had turned.

When I saw Wolfsohn the next morning, however, he considerably dampened my rising spirits by renewing his advice that I should go to Europe and begin my career in the orthodox way. He said that after having heard me play he had a "hunch" I might succeed. There was room for a woman pianist at the moment. Carreño \* was getting on and Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler was devoting much of her time to teaching and to her family. The important thing was to have all the conditions right.

I was so ignorant of professional life at that time that no argument he advanced seemed to outweigh my reasons for wishing to remain in America. When he saw that I was adamant he said: "If you are determined to begin in America, I see only one way to get anywhere near the 'big field.' *Hire an orchestra and give a concert in Carnegie Hall.* I can fill it for you—free tickets, of course—and such a concert will really call attention to you. I tell you frankly it is a gamble. It may not work. Everything depends upon the critics. If they come and write well, you may succeed. A debut recital by an unknown musician in a small hall will go by unnoticed. The chief critics rarely go to such recitals and their assistants usually wander in and out, hearing a bit of this and a bit of that. The public pays no attention to such concerts. But if you give one with or-

\* The greatest woman pianist of her age.

chestra, it is unusual enough to arouse some interest. If you make good you have a chance."

I asked him how much such a chance would cost. The answer (in four figures) took my breath away. Again the outlook seemed hopeless, for my four hundred dollars had already dwindled and they not only represented the sum total of my earthly possessions but they were needed to keep body and soul together. My mother, without whom I could never have had a professional career, asked for time to find ways and means. She communicated with my grandmother and those two extraordinary women decided to risk all that was left of their savings on this concert. My father consented, despite the hard struggle the family was having to begin life afresh after the disaster that had overtaken them. I have often wondered how I brought myself to allow them to do it, but the confidence of youth has strength, if not wisdom. I *believed* in a successful outcome.

Mr. Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony Orchestra were engaged for January 18, 1905, and I settled down to a preparation for the event which included several coaching lessons from Mr. Damrosch on my concertos. I had been without a teacher for four years so musical advice was much needed.

One tragi-comical and yet significant detail of the whole thing was the question of my name as an artist. When my first marriage ended I had decided to resume my maiden name, Hickenlooper. Mr. Wolfsohn, scarcely less indignant than the Conservatoire doorman of my student days, would not hear of using it for concert work. "It is hard enough at best for a woman to make a successful pianistic career. With a name like that it is impossible!" said he, with such finality that Mother and I suc-

cumbed. A feverish search for a name then ensued. A letter written to my grandmother at the time gives a full account of it.

Address your next letter to *Madame Olga Samaroff*, my dear and revered grandparent. I particularly regret that I must disregard your feeling about the matter of changing my name, because I share it. Like you, I hate the idea of an assumed name, but when you learn what Wolfsohn has said you will realize how foolish it would be not to heed his advice. He insists that the name of an artist is tremendously important. After all, we are babes in the woods in this concert business. Every visit to Wolfsohn's office makes me realize how little we know about the whole thing. I will try to write out our conversation with him just as it took place.

MR. WOLFSOHN (*hereafter Mr. W.*): "Don't let us argue any longer. I would be a thief if I let you spend a small fortune on a Carnegie Hall orchestral concert and put a name like Hickenlooper on the billboards. It can't be done."

ME (*timidly*): "Would you mind if I took a family name? Somehow it would seem to belong to me a little more."

MR. W. (*severely*): "Well what? I hope you haven't any Joneses or Smiths in your family."

MOTHER: "What about my maiden name, Loening?"

MR. W. (*unenthusiastically*): "That *might* do, but it is not picturesque. A name should suggest something. It should fit a personality. Loening suggests nothing to me and it doesn't fit this young lady's personality."

By that time I felt as though I were trying on hats or deciding upon the color of a dress. We begged for time to think it over. In the evening Uncle Albert came in and vetoed Loening. He said no Loening had ever been on the stage. Apparently while he was American Consul General in Bremen he was inoculated with the idea of the importance of his Bremen ancestors, and he

obviously viewed my concert ambitions somewhat in the light of a minor disgrace. He was very polite but firm in suggesting that some name other than Loening be used. I felt that after all the name was his, and I had no right to take it against his wishes. You may be interested to learn that the next morning Wolfsohn vetoed all *your* ancestral names. Palmer, Lacy, Stanton, Alden, Pierson, Cheeseborough, Minor, Goddard, Darlington, all I could think of were proposed and discarded in turn. Your ancestry, my darling, may fit you for the Colonial Dames or the Daughters of the American Revolution, but according to Wolfsohn it would certainly *unfit* me for a pianistic career.

MR. W.: "No Mayflower business should be suggested by your name. If anything connects you with New England, everybody will find you cold. You could smash a piano at every concert and they would still say you had no artistic temperament. Look at Emma Eames. She is one of the few American singers so far who has made a career with an out-and-out Anglo-Saxon name, but what do they say about her? *Cold*, always cold. They admit her beauty and her great voice, but there are always those who find her cold. Maybe she is and maybe she isn't, but her name has been wrong for her profession. And don't forget that it is much harder to make a career as a pianist—especially for a woman—than as a singer. A naturally beautiful voice goes a long way and the opera singer has costume, acting, the meaning of text, and collaboration with others to help. *You* will be alone on a bare stage playing abstract music on a black and white piano. God help you if anybody finds you cold in the bargain. No, you can't take any of those Anglo-Saxon names. Haven't you anything Slavic anywhere?"

It was then I climbed the family tree again and plucked Olga Samaroff, the one available Slav, from the remote branch which had been almost forgotten. Hermine von Starkloff had once told me about her. As far as I can gather she was considered a *mésalliance* and no one seems to know much about her except that

she was an actress before her marriage, but her name filled Wolfsohn with boundless enthusiasm.

MR. W.: "Now *that* is something like! You can get somewhere in the musical world with a name like that! You have lived more in Europe than in this country. You speak the languages. And you *have* been a Russian subject anyway . . ."

But here I cut him short and said very decidedly that there was to be no putting me forth as a Russian pianist. I insisted that all publicity was to give a true account of my nationality and birth—in San Antonio, Texas. I told him that I would never consent to appear in public as anything but an American. He grumbled quite a bit about my obstinacy on this point and I have a feeling he does not hold a very high opinion of my intelligence, but before leaving the office I heard him saying to someone over the telephone: "By the way, I have a new pianist—Samaroff—just over from Europe . . ." and then he began to describe me in terms that sent me racing home to practice. What a horrible thing to be condemned for the rest of my life to try to live up to high-powered salesmanship, especially when afflicted with my tendency to self-criticism. Do you suppose the day will ever come when *I* feel that what I do is worthy of being heard in public? At present, after listening to Wolfsohn's telephone conversation, I feel as though I should like to precede every concert with an address to the audience along the following lines: "Ladies and gentlemen: Before playing I should like to beg you to forget all claims made for me by my manager. I will do the best I can and I hope you will be more indulgent towards my playing than I am myself, but it will not be anything like what he says it is." I am sure these sentiments prove I am not fit for a public career. From now on I shall devote myself exclusively to music and let Mother and Wolfsohn attend to the rest. And I subscribe myself, my dear Grandmother, for the first time,

Your very devoted  
Olga Samaroff

One proof that the name Hickenlooper *might* have been a real disadvantage in the concert field is that whenever somebody who thoroughly dislikes me wishes to be disagreeable, he or she brings forth the name Hickenlooper as though uncovering some dire secret disgrace. As a matter of fact, although I long since took the name Olga Samaroff legally—for it proved to be a nuisance to have two names in professional life—nothing gives me more pleasure than to meet relatives or childhood friends from Texas to whom I always remain what I once was. But Wolfsohn's reaction to Hickenlooper throws a light on the many assumed names we find in the world of art and letters. Voltaire, George Eliot and Mark Twain probably had good reasons for taking the names they did. When Mrs. Armstrong became Nellie Melba and Lillian Norton became Lillian Nordica, they doubtless acted under the influence of ideas similar to those expressed by Wolfsohn. In my case, his strong insistence against an Anglo-Saxon name or one that suggested the truly Colonial-American stock which forms my ancestry (except for my German grandfather Loening), is significant because it reveals the essential American psychology of the time, the demand for foreign prestige and a certain discrimination against the native musician.

The conditions of beginning a professional career in the United States as I found them in 1905 clearly demonstrated how strongly Europe dominated our musical life. There is no rule without exceptions, and many native musical activities were going on at the time, but most of them took place outside of what Wolfsohn called the "big field," i.e., the major concert courses, the symphony orchestras, the Metropolitan Opera House, and,

in general, that part of the musical world which offered high reward and attracted widespread public support.

That I was able to pay back the family loan within a few months and go to London, where I gained the much-coveted stamp of European approval, was largely due to the outstanding flair for managing a concert career which my mother proceeded to develop. Mother and I were, as I had written my grandmother, a pair of babes in the woods when we began. Neither of us knew anything about the whole business, but within a short time my attractive mother had everybody connected with my career wrapped around her little finger. I attended as well as I could to the piano-playing and she did all the rest.

The personal experiences of the individual in beginning a musical career may or may not have any significance. Had I begun my own with the customary debut recital in Berlin or Vienna and arrived upon the scene in New York in the accepted pre-war fashion, there would be no point in recording the details. But the conversations with Henry Wolfsohn that led to my debut concert with orchestra in Carnegie Hall burned themselves into my brain as something so significant in connection with the fate of professional American musicians that it became the basis of all the work I did later in founding the Schubert Memorial for the benefit of young American artists.

This will be discussed in another chapter, but if any of the young artists who have benefited by their Schubert Memorial debut appearances with orchestra in New York in the past ten years read these lines, they will know that the fundamental idea of the Schubert Memorial was born of my own experiences in 1905.

# 3

## MUSICAL DEBUTS ON TWO CONTINENTS

---

THE AVERAGE music-lover who sits in his comfortable chair at a concert or opera performance might be profoundly amazed if he were suddenly given a real insight into the daily life and the many problems of the artists on the other side of the footlights.

The status of the professional performer in our occidental civilization has fluctuated between the extremes of initial degradation in the Middle Ages and a degree of glory and financial reward in modern times that seem out of all proportion to the world's treatment of great composers, although no one could deny the greater importance of the creative genius. The enviable lot of the successful performer is probably due to the fact that the survival and the public enjoyment of the composer's music depend in the last analysis upon adequate re-creation through performance. Such is the nature of our musical civilization, with its priceless and unique literature of musical masterpieces.

There are those who decry professionalism in music and deplore the difficulty of our music which, more than anything else, brought it into being. While some ardent advocates of an in-



crease in amateur musical performance have urged composers to write easy music well within the technical possibilities of the average dilettante, others who believe it to be the only salvation of the art openly proclaim that it makes no difference how badly amateurs perform a difficult piece of music so long as they do it. Nobody, however, has yet found a way by which the complete experience of hearing a musical masterpiece can be had without adequate performance, and that usually means professional performance.

The reason for this state of affairs lies in the essential difficulty of most great music. If the amateur has talent and gives sufficient time and effort to music, there is no reason why his art cannot equal that of the professional, but the fact remains that most amateurs cannot or do not make the necessary effort. Adequate training for the musical performer, if he is to measure up to professional standards, usually necessitates the devotion of ten or fifteen years to intensive work during which everything else must be subordinated to music. It is not surprising that those who make such an effort regard music as their life work and—if they are without other means of subsistence—eventually seek a livelihood in professional musical activity.

The greatest tragedy in the musical world lies in the fact that so many adopt this course without possessing sufficient talent to keep them afloat in the troubled waters of professional musical life. There is no domain of human endeavor which is more ruthlessly governed by the laws of the survival of the fittest, and the word "fittest" does not only apply to musical qualifications.

In addition to talent, the fit survivor on the concert or operatic stage must have great physical strength and endurance. His

nerves must be well controlled. Success in his profession also demands self-discipline, a well-developed intelligence, a forceful personality, imagination and magnetism. In order to project his art over the footlights, he must even possess a certain sense of the theatre—not a cheap appeal to the gallery, but a real dramatic instinct. Common sense, business ability and adaptability in human relations play their obvious part in any public career. If the musician lacks these qualities there must be someone at hand, whether parent, spouse or manager, to smooth his path and protect his interests. Fritz Kreisler, who might be considered the archetype of a modern successful virtuoso, makes no secret of what he owes to his wife. His loyal and open acknowledgment of his indebtedness to her is one of the most endearing things about him, and that means a great deal, for Kreisler is a very lovable human being.

My mother's confidence was my greatest help. Nevertheless, when the fateful day of my first concert arrived I spent most of it wishing I had never been born. My program included the Schumann A Minor Concerto, the Liszt E Flat Concerto and a group of Chopin solo pieces. It thus provided a stiff ordeal for an inexperienced young pianist (I was twenty-two) who had never played with an orchestra.

In a novel, doubtless, the heroine of such an occasion would have had an overwhelming success. She would have awakened the next morning to find herself famous. I am sorry to say I have no such story to tell. In fact, I remember very little about the concert. I was so dazed by nervousness that it seemed—even the following day—as though someone else had played.

Curiously enough it was not the audience that frightened me. Wolfsohn had kept his promise of filling the hall. The people

who bought tickets could be counted on the fingers of my hands; all the other seats had been given away, and I faced a huge sea of faces, but I remember being surprised to find that I felt quite at home as I walked on to the stage—almost as though I had been there before. I once asked a veteran German musician how he could account for this phenomenon. His answer was: "You are obviously a *Theater-Ratte*.\* One either is or isn't. But if you *are* a born *Theater-Ratte* you will never be afraid of audiences." I often wondered why—if this were true—I did not develop a greater love for the concert stage. Perhaps theatre rats feel at home without having a passionate attachment to the theatre.

In any case, being a *Theater-Ratte* does not entirely prevent nervousness, as I learned to my sorrow, for when I began to play I was engulfed by a tidal wave of terror. It could scarcely have been otherwise. I was not ready for such an ordeal and I knew it. I had worked hard for several months, but no amount of work in that space of time could make up for the fact that I had lost three and a half years—pianistically speaking—during my first marriage. I had been constantly occupied with music during those years, but not with piano music nor with piano technique.

Having abandoned all idea of a concert career, I had given free rein to my interest in other types of music. I had explored chamber music and orchestral scores, made music with the few musicians I knew at that time, and spent a large part of my life in concert halls and opera houses. All this widened my musical horizon and proved to be very valuable when I became a music

\* An expression applied by stage folk in Germany to those who, like the rats that inhabit a theatre, belong there.

critic and lecturer, but at the time my actual piano-playing inevitably suffered. I lacked the technical security that creates emotional freedom. I also lacked the seasoned mastery of the music I played that comes after repeated public performance. I was on the concert stage for the first time in my life. The soundness of my early training and the intensive work I had done in preparation for the concert pulled me through, but I must have played quite mechanically because I was literally benumbed.

It is surprising that, in spite of all this, some of the New York critics detected latent praiseworthy qualities. In general the newspaper reviews were such a contradictory jumble of good and bad that I was completely mystified. Could I play the piano or couldn't I? That was the question I had just asked my equally perplexed mother when Wolfsohn telephoned. To our surprise he was in a very cheerful frame of mind. He considered the concert a success and summoned us to his office.

When we arrived he proudly showed us a "broadside" carefully constructed by his efficient publicity expert. His "broadside," as Wolfsohn called it, consisted of all the favorable lines of my press reviews joined together with little dots where unfavorable ones had been omitted. It gave an impressive picture of my powers. Wolfsohn then explained that, while I could not be "handled as a sensation," I had proved I could "go over with an audience." The press reviews "might have been better" but there was "plenty of material for advertising." Everything now depended on having enough money for promotion. He had not spoken to me about it before because he knew how hard it had been to find the money for an orchestral concert, but now that I had "made good" we ought to be able to get "backing." He said many people wasted money on untried students. Why shouldn't

they back a promising debutante? How could we make it known that I had given what he called a successful concert without advertising? Nobody could begin any business without capital. He had noticed Colonel E. M. House and his wife in my dressing-room and had spoken with them. The Colonel had said that he and my mother were childhood playmates in Texas. Why couldn't the Colonel help, or procure help?

My mother timidly inquired whether it would not be possible for Wolfsohn to secure a number of concert engagements that would enable us to defray the expenses of my career ourselves. His answer was: "My dear lady, today is the nineteenth of January. At this time of the year we book engagements for the *following* season. Unless somebody gets sick or dies, there is no chance of concert engagements for anybody during the current season. Child prodigies or sensational singers might make money giving concerts of their own, but all the concert courses that engage artists were long since booked up. If you can find—say—five thousand dollars for promotional expenses, I shall be glad to sign a contract for next season, and while you are about it ask for more, so that Samaroff can play some London recitals in the spring. Recitals are all right for London and they cost very little as compared with New York." Once more, my mother and I were aghast. Begging and borrowing were equally repugnant to us. For several days we discussed various possibilities, only to reject them when it came to the point of action.

During this period of agonizing uncertainty my mother was a tower of strength. Despite her completely Protestant ancestry, she has been a devout Catholic throughout life. The reason for this throws an interesting light upon the influence of local conditions upon the lives of migrating American families. When

my great-grandfather, Eugene Palmer, established his family in Louisiana, the only Christian church within reach in which his children could be baptized was the Catholic Church. He and his wife were both Episcopalians, but they had their three daughters baptized by a Catholic priest. A Sacred Heart Convent was the best available school within reach, and that environment made a staunch Catholic of my grandmother, a curious development in a family that boasted numerous Protestant clergymen throughout Colonial times. My mother, whose religious nature made her the saint of the family, had an unshakable faith in divine answer to prayer. For her the success of my concert career was thus assured. But the memory of the days when we battled with the problem of how to carry on made me realize why so many promising young musicians, even after making a successful debut, disappear and are heard of no more.

In spite of my mother's rigid economy and miraculous management of our slender resources, we arrived one morning at the point of realizing that we could not hold out for another week. As we dejectedly came to the conclusion that we should give up and leave for St. Louis, a note arrived. It was from Miss Dehon, a lady to whom Geraldine Farrar had given me a letter of introduction.

Absorbed as I was in work, I had not presented the letter until a few days before my concert. Miss Dehon had dutifully left a card at my hotel and bought a box for the concert, but I had not yet met her. In the note she inquired whether I would play—professionally—after a luncheon she was giving in the near future, and what would be the amount of my fee.

The dismal hotel room suddenly became cheerful, flooded with the light of hope. Wolfsohn was consulted by telephone.



*"It was easy to understand after meeting Miss Dehon why she counted Christine Nilsson, the De Resses, Marcella Sembrich, Coquelin, Geraldine Farrar and many other great artists among her intimate friends."*





His point of view throws a light on the psychology of the professional world in those days.

"Ask a high fee," he urged. "People like that never believe that cheap artists are good artists. Either you play for nothing as a personal favor, or you ask a high fee. If you play around New York long enough for low fees, you will get a 'small fry' tag around your neck and that finishes you for the 'big field.' Women pianists are, of course, always less expensive than men pianists, but you *must* get above the 'small fry' level." Mother and I got perilously near the "small fry" level, because we could not bring ourselves to ask Miss Dehon the fee Wolfsohn advised, but the check for that first professional engagement seemed larger than any I have ever earned.

Miss Dehon apparently considered it normal. Had she not heard me play with orchestra in Carnegie Hall? Was the hall not filled with a huge and applausive audience? Wolfsohn's psychology about the orchestral debut was beginning to justify itself. The chief critics had come and written: the concert had had at least the atmosphere and outward characteristics of a musical event of consequence, and within two weeks I could command a respectable fee for a professional engagement.

Miss Dehon lived with her mother in one of the spacious brownstone houses on Fifth Avenue just below the old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel which then occupied the block between Thirty-Third and Thirty-Fourth Streets. The Livingstons lived across the Avenue, but business was creeping in on all sides and it was already apparent that the neighborhood was doomed as a residential district.

The interior of the Dehon house with its high ceilings and old-fashioned furnishings provided a perfect background for

those who lived there. Mrs. Dehon, a typical lady of the old school, wore severely plain dresses and a cap. She had an alert mind and a somewhat caustic wit. As she was in the habit of saying exactly what she thought, some people feared her ready tongue, but she was never mean or malicious. I found her delightful and always got on well with her. It was easy to understand after meeting Miss Dehon why she counted Christine Nilsson, the De Reszkes, Marcella Sembrich, Coquelin, Geraldine Farrar and many other great artists among her intimate friends. She had a warmth of temperament, a wealth of human sympathy and a degree of intuitive understanding which could not fail to attract artists. She was also original without the slightest suspicion of a pose.

Scorning slavery to fashions in dress, she had Worth in Paris make her clothes of the type she liked. They were mid-Victorian with a dash of rococo in her evening gowns, and they suited her exactly, emphasizing the things in her personality that made her so much of an individual.

Miss Dehon had a wide acquaintance, ranging from the ultra-conservative "Monday Sewing Class"—the last word in old New York social prestige—to some derelict who had been treated in the private ward for surgical operations which she maintained at Bellevue Hospital with the active co-operation of the famous surgeon and physician, Dr. William Mecklenburg Polk, whom she afterwards married.

As I learned to know her better I was sometimes permitted to accompany her on her errands of mercy. This experience made me realize how much we owe in America to men and women of her type. No matter how much our social order may change, we should not forget it, and it is not only their work in the

alleviation of poverty and suffering we should remember, but their important contributions to education, science and the arts.

In the field of music, Americans of this type played a great part. Not only such munificent benefactors as Colonel Higginson in Boston, Augustus Juilliard, Otto Kahn, Henry Harkness Flagler, Marshall Field, Paul Cravath, Paul and Felix Warburg and others in New York, the Boks in Philadelphia and George Eastman in Rochester, but a host of music-loving social leaders in many different communities formed the backbone of musical life, and took over in democratic America the function once performed by the royalty and aristocracy of Europe. Without these patrons our great musical development in the United States might never have taken place. The word patronage may not fall pleasantly on democratic ears, but what artist has done without the thing it expresses?

Neither money nor influence has ever created a real career for a musician who lacked talent, personality and the power of achievement, but even the greatest artist needs opportunity and support just as a plant needs proper soil, sun and light. That is why certain arts flourish in certain countries in one era and not in others. Conditions must be right for the general development as well as for the individual artist.

The chief trouble with patronage is that it seems to be so much of an accident. I have often wondered what would have happened to me if I had not brought the letter of introduction from Geraldine Farrar to Miss Dehon. It is certain she would not have gone to my concert. People of her type were not on managerial "dead-head" lists. They were supposed to pay for their tickets and they did, but they were not in the habit of attending the concerts of unknown artists unless they were per-

sonally interested. None of the socially distinguished guests assembled at Miss Dehon's luncheon had ever heard of me, but this one engagement started the ball rolling, and to Wolfsohn's great surprise I had enough private musicale engagements in a short space of time to keep me afloat and pay off my debt to the family. One musicale led to another, and my chief problem was to avoid repetition in the programs. I believe I reviewed every piano piece I had ever played in my life during this time, and it was well I did, for I faced the same problem in London several months later.

Another happy accident occurred later in the season in connection with a visit to Paderewski. Mr. Stetson of Steinway & Sons and Mr. Reidemeister, another member of the firm, had been my mother's constant advisers. They suggested to her that she should let an ambitious young man named Francke—who was in the employ of Steinway & Sons—see what he could do in the way of obtaining engagements for me until I could earn enough to satisfy the financial demands of a manager like Wolfsohn. Undoubtedly we might have procured financial backing at that time from a growing circle of interested friends, but I preferred to be independent. Also I was glad to have things move slowly for I wanted time in which to increase my repertory and grow up musically. I had no teacher, but I was relentlessly self-critical.

Mr. Francke took me to call upon Paderewski on a Sunday afternoon. Among the few people drinking tea served by Mrs. Paderewski, was a quiet gray-haired gentleman whose name at first escaped me. Mr. Francke, however, made a point of telling him all about me. The gentleman thereupon proceeded to ask me many questions about my work and my plans. My answers

seemed to amuse him and he afterwards told me that my mother and I were unlike anything he had ever encountered in the profession. We must have seemed very naïve in spite of all we had learned since September. For instance, when the gentleman asked me whether I should like to play in Boston in April and whether I would be free on a certain date, it never occurred to me to try to give him the impression that I was in demand. I promptly told him I had no engagements whatsoever in April! Smiling at this candor, the gentleman explained that the Boston Symphony Quartet (four members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra) were to give their last concert of the season in April. A Boston pianist had been engaged to play the Saint-Saëns C Minor Sonata for Piano and Cello with the cellist of the quartet. The pianist was ill and I might have the engagement if I would accept a modest fee. I accepted with enthusiasm.

The quiet gentleman was none other than Charles A. Ellis of Boston, the greatest musical manager in the United States. He did not have a large, general managerial office like Wolfsohn. He managed only the Boston Symphony Orchestra and a very few individual artists. Melba, Paderewski and Kreisler were under his management at the time of which I write. Geraldine Farrar and I were later added to the list.

Ellis's incorruptible integrity and artistic judgment had won him such prestige and influence that a letter from him was more potent than the most feverish personal efforts of road agents sent out by other managers. A contract with Ellis was therefore an open sesame in the American concert world, as I later learned through happy personal experience.

The above-mentioned concert with the Boston Symphony Quartet was a modest affair. The audience was small and I only

played the piano part of the Saint-Saëns Cello Sonata, but for some reason it struck fire with the redoubtable critic of the *Boston Herald*, Philip Hale, who proceeded to write a column of praise that helped to win me an engagement to play with the Boston Symphony Orchestra the following season.

The truth is, I had improved. All the playing I had done, even though it was only in private musicales, had given me confidence. I was beginning to acquire the pianistic equivalent of sea-legs. For many moons Philip Hale's review reposed under my pillow at night and was read whenever courage flagged, which often happened.

Ellis repeated Wolfsohn's advice that I should go to London, and in May my mother and I found ourselves in the Convent of the Holy Sacrament in Brompton Square. I had gone to school in a convent of the same order in Paris. The London convent accepted a certain number of lady boarders who desired a retired life. The boarders were supposed to adhere to certain rules and no one was admitted to the convent after nine o'clock at night. An exception was made for me because of professional duties, but this was supposed to be kept a secret. After late parties Mother and I would tap discreetly on the window of the lay sister who tended the door. This invisible guardian of the premises pulled a latch-string; we cautiously entered a dark corridor and crept upstairs in our stocking feet. No errant husband ever feared the creaking of the stairs more than we did on those occasions. But it was a godsend for us to have an inexpensive place in which to live, and one of the rooms happened to be so isolated that I could practice to my heart's content.

Ellis had arranged with a London agent for the management of my concerts, and on the boat train from Southampton to

London I found an announcement on the front page of a London Sunday paper which read like this:

OLGA SAMAROFF

PIANIST

*will play*  
*will play*  
*will play*  
*will play*  
*will play*  
*will play*  
*will play*  
*will play*  
*will play*  
*will play*

A RECITAL AT STEINWAY HALL

etc., etc.

The number of "will plays" in this strange newspaper advertisement was obviously limited only by the amount of space one was willing to buy. The psychological message was unmistakable. Nothing on earth could alter Olga Samaroff's determination to play. This forceful procedure was supplemented by hungry-looking sandwich men who marched up and down Regent Street bearing heavy placards urging the passers-by to hear Olga Samaroff's piano recital.

My first concert in London was also my first public solo recital anywhere. It took place in Steinway Hall which, small as it was, could not be filled for an unknown pianist, even when

the tickets were given away. The London season was in full swing and people had other things to do.

My small audience was, however, singularly distinguished. No less a personage than Thomas Hardy sat in the fifth row. My mother, resourceful as ever, had come to London armed with letters of introduction that kept us busy from morning till night. She had the clever idea of economizing by living at the convent (and Brompton Square was a good address according to London ideas) while making a more impressive appearance in other ways. She hired a neat town car, and the chauffeur suggested nothing less than ducal dignity. He was really quite magnificent. When we paid our calls or went to parties we were very smart, what with the car and a wardrobe we could share, for we were about the same size.

Among the people to whom we had letters of introduction were the John Lanes. As a leading London publisher, Mr. Lane was naturally in touch with many writers, and his charming wife made their drawing-room so delightful that one met most of the interesting people in London at her parties. It was she who brought Hardy to my debut.

At my second recital the audience was even more exciting. John Sargent was there, and Locke and William Watson. Can the reader imagine what it meant to a young musician to find an ode to her playing in a volume of verse by William Watson who almost became poet laureate of England at that time? His well-known poem—"The Woman with the Serpent's Tongue"—supposedly addressed to Lady Asquith (who is said to have prevented his being appointed poet laureate) had caused a great stir, and the ode to my playing appeared in the same volume of verse.



The London critics, particularly Fuller Maitland, were good to me, and during my short stay in the British capital, I played a great deal in the drawing-rooms of people whose influence was supposed to be so great that the privilege of playing at their parties was its own reward. I made no money whatsoever in London, but before I left I was assured of an engagement to play with the London Symphony Orchestra during the following season in a concert conducted by Arthur Nikisch at the Queen's Hall. In view of my *Backfisch-Schwärmerei* for Nikisch this was enormously exciting, and I counted the weeks throughout the year. If we had been able to stay longer and give more recitals there might have been some profitable engagements in the provinces in the autumn, but money gave out and we returned to America where I passed the rest of the summer in hot New York practicing eight hours a day. We remained in New York because we found it would be much more economical and practical if we took a tiny apartment by the year rather than living in hotels. I am glad that I had this experience of periodic privations and general financial uncertainty. Those who lack such experience never really know life completely.

I did not have much time for reflection, however, for I was engaged in the hardest struggle a young musician can have, namely, to keep up with circumstances that always threatened to outstrip my possibilities. I did not have enough technique, I did not have enough repertory, and I faced the terrible ordeal of playing things in public as fast as I learned them instead of having time to let them mature. I had not set the world on fire but I already had a degree of success that strained my existing equipment to the breaking point.

## 4

# SOME ASPECTS OF LIFE ON THE CONCERT STAGE

---

IF I DWELL more, in the early chapters of this book, upon the material side of an artist's life, it is because my experience serves as an example of a reality that is seldom understood outside of the profession. It loomed large at the time of which I write in the consciousness of an inexperienced young musician who was trying to find herself in a strange world full of perplexing and often very unsympathetic problems.

I had not yet reached the point at which the mature artist can forget about technical difficulties and surrender himself wholly to the inspirational experiences of concert performance. Even when that time comes, no artist can escape entirely from a certain daily preoccupation with the problems of management, publicity and many other aspects of a concert career that are far removed from music itself. That is the chief reason why I never unreservedly liked the life of a concert pianist.

In the mind of the aspiring music student a successful concert or opera career seems to consist of artistic thrills, glory and fabulous earnings. The average concert-goer or opera subscriber

thinks of the famous artist as a being who, through the possession of divine gifts, is able to make music at any time without any trouble whatsoever.

Some members of the musical public, who listen only with their emotions, go still further. They absolve the musician from all the moral standards they demand of other men, because in order to produce the highly desirable emotional thrills that are expected of him, the musician, according to their ideas, must so conduct himself in life that his "artistic temperament" is kept at fever heat. Such people seem to derive some sort of vicarious satisfaction from the much-discussed emotional experiences of the artist who strays from the narrow path. Under no circumstances, in their opinion, should a musician conform to any life pattern other than that of the temperamental and eccentric artist which has become almost as conventional as mid-Victorian propriety.

When a famous musician like Richard Strauss appears to find happiness in marriage, children and grandchildren, it is positively resented in some quarters. "His wife must be a regular Xantippe," say these relentless critics whose conception of the make-up of genius has been disturbed, "otherwise she could never hold him."

My first consciousness of the existence of a conventional pattern of artistic unconventionality came when a lady in Boston told a friend of mine that while she had never heard me play, she had met me, and she could never believe I was a *real artist* because I was "too much like other people."

My friend was ready to kill the lady, but I preferred to have some fun with her. I knew that she was to be a guest over the week-end at a country house to which I had also been invited.

I prepared my hosts for the worst and took the other guests into my confidence. From Friday evening until Monday morning my artistic temperament seethed. I wore strange clothes; I fixed my hair in a manner that might have set a fashion if anybody had been able to copy it; I flirted outrageously with every male in the house and made a particularly fiery attack upon a reticent Bostonian who was known to be a devoted husband; I awoke myself with an alarm clock and pounded the piano between three and four in the morning; in general, I was so thoroughly rude and inconsiderate that my friends were ready to throw me into the near-by Atlantic, but the lady went back to Boston filled with the conviction that I was a "real artist." She apologized handsomely for her former doubts, and said "one must really know something about artists in order to appreciate their art." I have no doubt that while I was playing a concerto with the Boston Symphony Orchestra the following week, her imagination strayed to my passion for the reticent Bostonian and she wondered whether I had succeeded in breaking up his once-happy home. Young as I was at the time, I learned a secret of life from this nonsense; namely, that any human being who follows the impulse of the moment and in general conducts himself without the slightest consideration for anybody or anything can fit the pattern of a "temperamental artist." It is perhaps well for all young musicians to reflect upon this truth, for if they realize it they may be honest enough never to glorify deeds of weakness or selfishness by attributing them to "artistic temperament," even though they will always find people in the world who are inclined to encourage such a camouflage. Certainly if musical performers attempted to lead the lives they are supposed to lead by such members of their audiences as the above-

mentioned lady in Boston, the emotional effect of their playing would be considerably lessened by a badly damaged technique.

During the period when I was devoting myself most assiduously to the duties of a concert career, a masculine friend for whom I seldom had any time complained that the conditions of my existence resembled three types of life rolled into one, namely, those of the nun, the day laborer, and the prize-fighter. If I was not absorbed in things far beyond this mundane sphere, he grumbled, I was working like a galley-slave or going to bed early, dieting and exercising like a prize-fighter in order to keep fit.

On my return to America after my first London season, I found that Francke had procured about thirty engagements for me. They were mostly within a radius of two hundred miles, and three hundred dollars was the highest fee on a list that showed only a hundred and fifty dollars in some smaller towns; but considering the fact that Francke was not a regular manager and had limited connections, everybody felt he had done very well.

The territory of my small prospective tour was favorable because traveling expenses were slight, but in spite of the respectable success of his efforts it was obvious that there could be no future along larger lines under Francke's management. The artistic success of a concert performer depends upon his own powers, but he cannot make a public career on a big scale without a manager of high standing and wide connections. Wolfsohn had managed my first concert and was interested, but his demands for promotion money had stood in the way of my having him as my regular manager.

In the spring of 1906, my mother burst into the room where

I was practicing in a Boston hotel, her eyes shining with excitement. I had played my first concert with the Boston Symphony Orchestra the day before and we had every reason to be happy. The warmth of the audience and of the press reviews might well have accounted for my mother's shining eyes, but I knew her obvious state of excitement meant something more.

"Ellis is to be your manager," she exclaimed as she sank into the nearest chair. "I can hardly believe it, and never tell me prayers are not answered!"

Between excitement and the idea of Mother's bombarding the Almighty every morning at early mass until the helpless Ellis signed a contract, I laughed until I cried. He hadn't a chance in the world to escape managing me with Mother praying for it. But I soon realized the serious value of the blessing that had fallen to my lot.

Ellis demanded no money for promotion. Not only did he proceed to get me all the engagements I could play, gradually working up to the highest fees a woman pianist could earn in those days—five to six hundred dollars a concert—but he taught me how to make a concert career. His early conversations with my mother and me had aroused his kind desire to enlighten us in the things we ought to know. His wisdom and complete understanding of the great industry that had grown up around the art of music should be recorded here, because it not only gives a clear picture of the habits and customs of the day in the world of music, but of the underlying psychology from which they sprang.

Ellis (and indeed most managers) divided musical performers into three categories.

1. The "box-office attraction," i.e., the artist who could draw huge crowds.
2. The "legitimate artist," i.e., the one who could be depended upon to give a musical performance of the highest order but whose drawing power was less spectacular.
3. The "small fry," i.e., the young or unknown artist and all those who never rose above a modest level of achievement or reputation.

The question of "box-office attraction" was one that baffled the most experienced managers. Had it been clearly a question of artistic superiority, the commercial end of artistic undertakings would have been relatively easy to manage; but artists were sometimes "box-office attractions" in one country and not in another. The same discrepancy could be observed between financial returns in different cities, and it was unhappily possible for an artist to be a "box-office attraction" at one time of his life and not at others. Therefore the musical qualifications of an artist did not automatically assure his box-office value. Many of the greatest artists, like Pablo Casals, never drew the largest crowds in the United States, while some of those who did, could not possibly be considered great artists. These were the things that inevitably made the business of managing concerts as exciting and as unpredictable as the gaming table or the stock market. In fact I never knew a manager who did not have a streak of the gambler in his make-up. I never knew one who did not obey "hunches" nor one who failed to take unbelievable risks.

The most popular—and usually profitable—"securities" in

the managerial stock market were the child prodigy, the coloratura soprano, and the instrumentalist of a pronounced virtuoso type.

The reality of the musical prodigy is not very far removed from the trained seal so far as the attitude of the spectator is concerned. The seal would not normally catch balls or juggle them. It is scarcely more natural for a child to perform feats of virtuosity upon a musical instrument. Only through arduous training and work that overtaxes mental and physical endurance can even the most gifted child achieve the skill necessary to public performance. Apparently, the average human being enjoys witnessing such abnormal feats. The person who is best able to appreciate the talent of the prodigy is apt to wish the child might be put to bed and in general be kept in the seclusion that would insure the finest and most normal development of its powers, but as a rule the public is willing to pay heavily for the experience of watching a child do the work of a strong man. Even here, however, the manager *may* strike a snag. One child prodigy draws and another doesn't, even though according to the best authorities the one is just as good as the other.

Ellis's analysis of the "box-office attraction" seems to come as near to the truth as any I ever heard. He claimed that something about the personality or history of the artist must capture the imagination and arouse the human curiosity of a *non-musical public* above and beyond the musical audience that would be normally interested in artistic achievement.

This point of view has logic. It could even account for the phenomenon that an artist may be a "box-office attraction" in one country and not in another. The things that would capture the imagination and arouse the human curiosity of the public in





*"My natural expression in photographs is either morose or perfectly blank. If the photographer's incessant demands for smiles (or Mother's prayers) produce a half-way decent result, I promptly look like somebody else, witness that dreadful smirking photograph taken by Reutlinger in Paris last Spring. I look like a lady from the Folies Bergeres."*



one country might well fail to do so in others. Certainly in pre-war America, specifically in the United States, the really musical public in most cities could not fill the largest halls.

The programs of most "box-office attraction" artists reflect a certain consciousness on their part that they face a partly unmusical audience. The singer who features "The Little Gray Home in the West," and invariably concludes a program with "Home, Sweet Home" or "Comin' through the Rye," is obeying psychological laws that do not govern the making of an artistic Lieder program planned for an audience with highly cultivated taste. The instrumental virtuoso of the "box-office attraction" type is obliged to play familiar music and devote a large part of his program to sentimental or catchy tidbits. Modern music is anathema to his audiences and even unfamiliar classics are not over-welcome. I put these thoughts in the present tense because they hold good today. Musicians learned to know them in my youth, as they do today, through endless controversies over programs with the local managers or clubs who engage artists.

Sometimes a pre-war local manager would arrange a single concert for some "sure-fire box-office attraction," but as a rule there was a subscription series of concerts in most cities where "box-office attractions" and "legitimate artists" were discreetly mixed by the local manager, club or committee arranging the concerts. When, as often happened in prosperous pre-war days, the entire course was sold out by subscription, the "legitimate artist" often faced a "box-office attraction" type of audience, and was therefore urged to play or sing popular programs.

It is largely because many "legitimate artists" refused to make such compromises that the acquaintance of the larger public

with musical masterpieces was widened. That reminds me of an amusing story told by John McCormack. Being a "box-office attraction" (as well as a superlative artist), the famous tenor frequently devoted a large part of his program to popular Irish ballads and kindred songs. But he always began it with a group of masterpieces from the Lieder literature.

One day an acquaintance asked him for a ticket to one of his recitals, and added, "But I will only come in after you have finished with that highbrow stuff." "Not on your life," replied McCormack, "if you get a free ticket for my concert you will sit in the third row where I can see you, and you will hear the whole program."

The acquaintance resigned himself to his fate and dutifully took his place before the concert began. During the intermission he rushed into McCormack's dressing-room and exclaimed excitedly: "Why didn't you tell me that fellow Schubert could write tunes?"

It took me a long time to adjust myself to the realization that I had become a part of a great industry. The musician, living in a world of his own and constantly preoccupied with an art that is so far removed from material things, has a grave problem in this connection, but thanks to Ellis and to my mother I managed to arrive at a sane and sometimes half-amused acceptance of the inevitable.

My father, himself a business man, once wrote that he could not quite understand the workings of the concert industry. He asked some specific questions and my answer, written in the midst of my first season under Ellis's management, throws light upon professional life in music. I quote part of my letter:

Dear Daddy,

It seems fantastic for me to be trying to enlighten you with regard to business, but in view of your questions I will try to pass on as much information as I have been able to gather myself about the things which have aroused your curiosity. As far as I can make out, I am the "goods," Ellis is the "wholesaler," and the local manager is the "retailer" from whom the consumer public purchases my concert. There has to be a wholesale manager, because no artist, or anybody connected with him, could possibly attend to all the details of concerts in many different cities. I am terribly lucky to have Ellis. The reason why he did not demand five thousand dollars for promotion as Wolfsohn did, is simply because he seems to be able to get me as many engagements as I can play by writing letters about me. He modestly says this is because he manages so few artists, but we know it is also because he has a unique prestige. He has explained to me that Wolfsohn's long list of artists, big and little, necessitates a huge organization including expensive road agents who travel about trying to "sell" all these musicians to local managers or concert-giving organizations. The artist has to pay his share of this heavy overhead expense, besides personal advertising.

I doubt if I shall ever get accustomed to this buying and selling business. I had an awful shock in Ellis's office yesterday when I heard him say over the long-distance telephone, "I would not exactly refuse to let you have Samaroff on a percentage basis, but I should prefer to sell her outright."

I could not decide whether I felt more like a bag of potatoes or a white slave! What a horrible jargon they use in managerial offices!

Ellis's contract with me provides that I pay him twenty per cent of my fees and that I undertake all expenses of printing and distributing circulars, window cards and three-sheet posters. I also pay my own traveling and living expenses and I must provide photographs galore. Professional photographs are an awful

nuisance. Ellis's press agent Billy Walter can never get enough. I have to sit for hours and change my dress every ten minutes. The results are growing worse and worse. I hardly dare open a newspaper in cities where I am about to play for fear of seeing myself at my very worst staring back at me from the printed page. Poor Mother hooks up my dresses at the photographer's studio and worries over my hair. I strongly suspect she also prays for me in a corner, but everything the photographer says rubs me the wrong way. My natural expression in photographs is either morose or perfectly blank. If the photographer's incessant demands for smiles (or mother's prayers!) produce a halfway decent result, I promptly look like somebody else. Witness that dreadful smirking photograph taken by Reutlinger in Paris last spring; I look like a lady from the *Folies Bergères*. I have come to regard the photographer as my natural enemy and unspeakable things happen to my disposition when I meet him.

In spite of all the overhead expenses (of which the photographs are the most unwelcome), my contract with Ellis is the best any artist could have. You should hear the tales musicians tell of some European artists who have come to America with the kind of contract that means they are "bought" by their general manager. He then pays them so much a concert and "sells" them for whatever he can get. This is real speculation, and I heard of one violinist who had a contract like that on the basis of five hundred dollars a concert. He had a sensational success and his manager sold him for fifteen hundred dollars straight through the season. The manager was within his legal rights but imagine the feelings of the violinist!

Ellis never does anything like that. He always works on a straight percentage basis with the artist and that is one reason why the local managers and concert-giving organizations all have such confidence in him. Another reason for the fact that a letter from him can procure an engagement without the persuasive activities of a road agent is because he only manages artists in whom he believes. No amount of promotion money would induce

him to manage an artist without this strong faith in his ability. The local managers throughout the country know this and have confidence in his judgment. Some local managers have told me that "Ellis artists" are considered to be "gilt-edged securities" in the musical stock market. And to think that my good fortune in being under Ellis's management grew out of that little engagement with the Boston Symphony Quartet which he gave me after meeting me at the Paderewski tea! How could anybody doubt that there is such a thing as destiny?

Ellis, however, strongly believes that "the Lord helps those that help themselves." The other day I was playing a recital engagement in a place where I had appeared with an orchestra earlier in the season. Ellis had some Boston Symphony business to attend to there for the following season, so he made the trip with us. On the train I had one of the accesses of gratitude which occur from time to time when I stop to think of all that has happened, and I said something to him about my conviction that being under his management had made my career. He always pooh-poohs such remarks, but in this conversation he took occasion to enunciate what I have learned to know is one of his favorite axioms: "Let me point out one thing with regard to your concert tonight. It is a re-engagement. *I can perhaps get your first engagement in a city but you and your playing have to get the second and all those that follow.* If I had not believed you could do this, I should not be your manager. . . ."

From the beginning of my career I was impressed by the importance attached to the activities of the press agent by everybody in the profession. Some musicians have engaged their own personal press agent, but the personnel of a managerial office has always included a publicity expert.

Ellis had a splendid press agent in William Walter, but in spite of his lively imagination, experience and skill, this resourceful scribe had periodic fits of despair over the problem of

sending out "human interest" releases about me. "You are so damned respectable," he complained, during my first season with Ellis, "I'll never be able to land you on the first page."

I realized how difficult it must be to make a hard-working and sober-living pianist interesting to the man in the street, so I earnestly strove to emulate certain siren opera singers who received a great deal of attention from the press. I offered to engage myself to any man Walter might pick out, provided somebody else would marry the man. That plan did not prove to be popular, so I suggested shaving my head, just to be original among all the long-haired men pianists. When Ellis vetoed that, I gave up in despair and left Walter to invent something that would carry me through the season. In that particular year he concocted a story about a terrific storm on a dangerous mountain peak (I had been climbing some inoffensive Bavarian Alps during the summer) in the course of which I saved the life of my fellow-climbers by miraculous presence of mind. This story was usually printed as advance publicity in the newspapers of various cities before my concerts, and as I invariably arrived too late in each town to see it, I was finally obliged to send a telegram from Denver pleading for enlightenment: questions on the subject had become highly inconvenient.

I once received some unusual publicity in the Boston *Transcript* and used it to tease Walter—who had nothing to do with it—by assuring him that if he had really understood me as this anonymous poet did, he would never have had any trouble with me. At the time I had had an operation for appendicitis in Boston which forced me to cancel a number of concerts. Some wag on the paper invented the following limerick which was cut out



of the *Transcript* and sent to me by every human being I knew in Boston. It read:

There was a young woman, Samaroff,  
 With the hearts of the people she made off  
 'Till a surgical mutt  
 With a scalpel that cut  
 Made off with a part of Samaroff.

In the field of advertising, the most important items—the circulars, window cards and enormous three-sheet posters that are used to announce and advertise each individual concert—have always demanded great ingenuity in order to be effective. Writing the circular as well as designing the window cards and posters requires expert ability. The placing of the window cards and posters is also very important. The most favorable strategic position for the three-sheets has always been the entrance façade of the hall where the concert is to take place.

I once witnessed a strange battle in which the weapons were brushes and pails of glue. I was giving a concert in the evening and Schumann-Heink was giving one in the afternoon in the same hall. According to the laws that govern such things we both had a right to adorn the façade of the building with our posters. Unluckily we were being locally managed by rival concerns. Animated by the pugnacity that rivalry usually arouses in human beings, each local manager was determined that the poster display of his artist should outdo the other. Grim squads of workmen were at hand to accomplish this purpose. No sooner was one of my posters in place than the rival squad would cover it with one of Schumann-Heink. The boards finally held a col-

lection that reminded me of those sandwiches of layers of black and white bread that are served at tea parties.

The battle went on as long as the posters lasted. I could not wait to see who won out when they were exhausted, but Schumann-Heink and I had a good laugh over it in her dressing-room at her concert, despite the fact that she was somewhat low in her mind because—as she picturesquely expressed it—"the plumbing has fallen out of my tooth." Her English remained unique in spite of long residence in the United States.

The years—from 1906 until 1911—during which I was under Ellis's management were happy and prosperous. He kept me so busy in America that there was little time for European appearances, but I played some concerts each spring in London, and Ellis, enlisting the assistance of leading managers in various countries, arranged concerts on the Continent including debuts under the best auspices such as the Colonne Orchestra in Paris and the *Konzert Verein* in Vienna.

Among my professional experiences in America one of the most amusing was a joint concert tour with my old friend Geraldine Farrar, who had recently been added to the short list of Ellis's artists. Geraldine and I had been boon companions in Europe before I began my concert career. We had spent gay summers together in the Bavarian Alps with a young German friend, Clodia von Toussaint, and her mother, and young as we were when we embarked upon our joint concert tour, the memory of our earlier association made us feel still more youthful. It was not easy to know what to do with our irrepressible spirits when we were cooped up day after day on trains, but we finally found a splendid outlet in teasing the amiable Mr. William Brennan, then Ellis's assistant and eventually his successor

as manager of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Brennan had been sent on tour with us and the stories he afterwards told about his experiences with us would fill a book.

Geraldine and I thought up the most impossible demands. We threatened to strike and refuse to go on the stage at the next concert unless we were at once provided with the most unobtainable varieties of food and drink; we surreptitiously turned our window cards upside down in the showcases of shops and then complained loudly of the management that would permit a public display of Geraldine Farrars and Olga Samaroffs standing on their heads; no pair of naughty children could have thought up more absurd ways in which to worry a hapless road manager. Mr. Brennan, whose Irish sense of humor enabled him to enjoy all the nonsense, got even with us, however, for when Mr. Ellis met us at Back Bay station in Boston, he did not celebrate the end of our tour with flowers or anything befitting our age and the occasion. He solemnly presented each of us with a large teddy bear.

Scotti, who had joined us for a single performance (a hospital benefit concert in Chicago) and had also been the victim of several practical jokes, agreed that Mr. Brennan's reports about our general conduct had fully justified the nature of Mr. Ellis's reception at the end of our tour.

Another delightful memory of those days was my appearances as soloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. I always loved playing with orchestras: it was like chamber music on a grand scale. The pre-war Boston Symphony was at the height of perfection and fame under the direction of Karl Muck. He had inherited a perfect instrument from his predecessor Wilhelm Gericke, and he was an interpreter of supreme gifts. Excerpts

from two letters written to my grandmother describe my first performances under Muck's direction.

I had my first rehearsal with Muck and the Boston Symphony this morning. He is a grand conductor. He has such a reputation for being nasty to soloists that I felt a bit panicky. But the men of the orchestra greeted me like an old friend and that broke the ice. Muck never pays compliments but he gave me a wonderful accompaniment. It was really like playing chamber music and I appreciated it all the more when I discovered how he detests Tschaikowsky's music. I am playing the B Flat Minor Tschaikowsky Concerto with him in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington. Ellis insisted upon the Tschaikowsky concerto because he had advertised heavily with the reviews I got when I played it last spring with Nikisch in London. I would be delighted to change the concerto but there is no more time for rehearsal, so Muck will have to grin and bear it.

Excerpt from a letter a week later:

The tour has been great fun. Julie Stevens \* went with me as Mother had a cold. Julie claims that she is utterly exhausted after chaperoning me and a hundred men. Muck couldn't have been nicer, but a devil lurks in his make-up. By the time we got to Washington, conducting Tschaikowsky had gotten on his nerves. He had a Mephistophelian gleam in his eye before we began the last movement of the concerto (in which the orchestra sets the pace in the opening measures) and he started off at a tempo that literally took my breath away. Some of the orchestra men told me afterwards they felt their hair standing on end. To me, it seemed exactly like tobogganing down the Cresta Run at St. Moritz. By some miracle I managed to get through without a spill and it brought down the house. The tempo created much more excitement than the music itself could have aroused, so

\* Mrs. Oliver Crocker Stevens of Boston, an intimate friend of the author.

Muck's devilry gained the greatest success for the hated concerto, as he laughingly admitted, but he took a horrible risk. Now I think I will always have to take the last movement, if not at a Muck tempo, at least a good deal faster than it is usually played. It is rather empty music, but it has a certain barbaric rhythmic vitality that becomes really exciting when it sweeps recklessly along. So I learned something!

Muck hates all the receptions and dining and wining artists have in America. I can stand it better because I am inclined to like people and one always finds at least a few thoroughly nice human beings in the crowd. But Muck seems to be filled with contempt for the human race and assumes people are fools unless shown proof to the contrary. I wonder whether such an attitude is born or made? Muck is capable of being a good friend. Ellis is devoted to him and so is Colonel Higginson. By the way, I sat beside Colonel Higginson at dinner at the Crafts in Boston. He gave me a long lecture on saving my money—said most artists are spendthrifts and come to grief sooner or later. . . .

Most musicians shared Muck's feeling about dining and wining and, above all, receptions in America. In Europe, when not actually on the stage, the musician has been permitted to lead a life of relative privacy, whereas in America he is considered public property.

One reason why the musicians who traveled through the United States giving concerts were so much in the public eye in pre-war days is because there were very few of them in comparison with those that were active in Europe at the same time, or with those who struggle for a place in the sun in America today.

The astute American manager before the World War was very conservative in the number of artists he imported. Too many glutted the market. Ellis, of course, was unique in this

connection. He never at any time managed more than five individual artists, but even the manager with a large organized business was very careful not to have more than a certain number of musicians of each type.

Men pianists and women pianists were as rigorously separated in the managerial mind and in the conduct of the industry as the congregation of a Quaker meeting. It would ill beseem a woman pianist to discuss this matter on the basis of relative merit, but the fact remains that the female of the species invariably received lower fees than a man with the same degree of success and reputation. For this reason, a successful woman pianist was a good bargain for the organizers of subscription concert series, as Ellis heartlessly told me in one of our long conversations on the subject of business.

Obviously, the local manager who was obliged to pay a three-thousand-dollar fee for a Metropolitan Opera star was very glad to engage a woman pianist who could be depended upon to entertain the same audience throughout an evening in the same concert series for a fee of five or six hundred dollars. Wolfsohn had long since told me that Teresa Carreño, the most successful of the woman pianists who had preceded me, never earned more than six hundred dollars a concert in the United States. I have been told that since the war Myra Hess has raised the limit of the woman pianist's fee. I hope she has, although I have never investigated the truth of the report.

Ellis's analysis of this sex phenomenon in the pianistic field was simple, but probably correct. He said that most people in the United States who were interested in piano-playing were women, and that they were much more likely to buy tickets for a man's piano recital than for the concert of a woman pianist.

This is not the only instance in which discrimination against women may have had its root in feminine psychology.

The relatively few artists who were under contract for a concert tour with the big American managers in pre-war times could scarcely escape the limelight. Busy press agents kept them in the consciousness of the public through systematic and continuous press "releases." If the communications were spicy enough, they appeared throughout the country on weekly pages devoted to music, or in personality columns. For several weeks before his arrival local managers and clubs conducted intensive publicity campaigns in the cities or towns where an artist was to appear in concert. In those peaceful pre-war days, world affairs were not so exciting as they now are. The press agent had a much wider field of activity than his modern prototype, who still tries to do the same thing but faces such competition from history-in-the-making, film stars, sport stars and gangsters that his musician must be content with a much more modest place in the general journalistic scheme of things.

In pre-war days, when the press agent had more ample elbow room, he usually succeeded in whetting the interest of the American, who is by nature inclined to personality-worship, to the point where he had a natural desire to meet the artist about whom he had been reading for weeks.

The local management was not slow to realize the value of such personal interest, and artists were urged to accept invitations. Some musicians refused to give of their time and strength for such things, but when Ellis explained to me what it meant to the local manager or club, I tried to do what they asked as far as I could.

The pre-war type of the individual local manager is rapidly

disappearing. The World War, the depression and certain changes in general musical conditions have been too much for him. But in pre-war days there were certain gallant figures that stand out in the memory of artists who knew them. Some of the most successful local managers were women. For instance, Adella Prentiss Hughes in Cleveland, Mai Davis Smith in Buffalo and May Beagle in Pittsburgh performed an important cultural service for their respective cities.

Mai Davis Smith may be cited here as a brilliant example of the pre-war local manager. She was well-born and had the advantage of more than usually wide social connections. When she became a widow and undertook managerial work, she shared the apartment of Marian de Forest, a clever writer and newspaper woman, whose excellent dramatization of *Little Women* has doubtless been enjoyed by many of my readers. Marian de Forest thereafter acted as press agent in a business partnership that cemented a friendship of long standing between the two women.

I met this delightful pair of local managers when I played for the first time in Buffalo. They had unlimited confidence in Ellis and were among the first to engage me when he became my manager. Yearly re-engagements in Buffalo became a feature of my American seasons and my acquaintance with these delightful women ripened into a friendship that gave me an insight into their work.

They took grave risks in the sense that they signed contracts for artists with the general managers and contracts of rental for Convention Hall in Buffalo to the extent of twenty or thirty thousand dollars before a single ticket for their concert series was sold. Then they had to roll up their sleeves and work to save



their necks, financially speaking. If their concert series was sold out, all was well for the year, although the most they could earn was a very modest sum in comparison with the amount of work involved. If the concerts were not completely subscribed for, they faced serious financial difficulties. Fortunately the sold-out sign was seldom lacking. Mai Davis Smith, who was very pretty and well-dressed, did the individual campaigning and few could resist her. Hard-headed business men who would rather be hung than go to a concert, subscribed handsomely to the entire series under the influence of Mai Davis's feminine charm, and then proceeded to give the tickets to relatives or to the office force. Marian de Forest attacked the general public with her pen. She cleverly sketched each of the artists on the course in such an alluring way that the musical inertia of Buffalo gave way to a burning desire to see in the flesh the creatures of Marian's lively imagination.

I always arrived in Buffalo with a prayer on my lips that I might be able to play the part Marian had assigned to me for that particular visit. She always had reporters waiting for us in the special suite of rooms in the old Iroquois Hotel that was assigned to "visiting celebrities." Handsome floral tributes were part of the *mise-en-scène* and the hotel chef invariably named a dish after the artist.

One really began to feel like somebody when one read "*Velouté of Chicken à la Samaroff*" on a menu.

There was no end to the resourcefulness of these invincible managerial partners. One day they told me that Mai Davis had persuaded a high official of the Larkin Soap Factory to subscribe for a block of three hundred seats for the concerts of the season. In large Convention Hall this was a great help.

Whether or not they wanted to go to a piano recital, I found that three hundred of the factory employees were doomed to hear me play. Mai Davis Smith and her genial partner, however, were not content with a mere three hundred. Already they had their eyes fixed upon several thousand additional employees who were as yet free of their net. They asked whether I would be willing to play a few pieces in the central hall of the factory (which was surrounded by tiers of galleries on each floor of the building) during the noon recess. They felt that if the artists of the current season would co-operate in such a plan, the block of Larkin Soap Factory seats would be much larger the following year. Such were the unexpected incidental activities of a musician on tour. One could never tell what strange situations might grow out of the specific conditions of a town in which one played.

My visit to the Larkin Soap Factory provided an adventure for a steamer acquaintance who, like all Europeans, had made a pilgrimage to Niagara Falls. He was an excitable, bearded Hungarian who spoke no English. I had made an appointment to see him at my hotel in Buffalo before arrangements for the impromptu factory concert had been made, but as I imagined it might interest him to see a big American industrial plant, I left a car for his use and full instructions with the hotel porter to send him after me. Unluckily, the porter thought my friend was also fully instructed, so all he did was to usher him to the waiting car. In spite of protests in every language he commanded (none of which the porter understood), the unhappy and unwilling Hungarian was forced into the car and whisked away, firmly convinced that he was being kidnaped. Completely mystified, he was finally deposited in the Larkin Soap

## Concert by Grand Opera Stars Nets \$10000 for German Hospital.



## 16-CONCERT NETS \$10,000

Thousands Fight to Hear Stars in German Hospital Benefit.

## HEAT JAM AT AUDITORIUM.

Lovers Crowd Aisles, Causing Clashes with Police.

One hundred dollars will be added to the list of the German hospital of Chicago as result of the concert of Miss Geraldine Farrar, Signor Antonio Scotti and Neta Samaroﬀ, given for the benefit of the institution at the Auditorium theater yesterday evening.

Under the conditions and the attractive program brought about the German society. Hundreds of applicants for a place were turned away, and more than once the aisles of the hospital clashed with the city men on duty at the theater. In some cases, the audience was so dense that some of the more enthusiastic lovers had to be dragged

## CONCERT OF STARS NETS \$10,000

Farrar, Scotti and Samaroﬀ in Benefit for German Hospital.

Miss Geraldine Farrar's soprano, Signor Antonio Scotti's baritone and Neta Samaroﬀ's

## FARRAR, SCOTTI AND SAMAROFF IN CHICAGO

Operatic and Piano Music Combined in Charity Concert That Nets \$10,000

Chicago, Oct. 25.—Geraldine Farrar, Antonio Scotti, grand operatic stars, together with that aristocrat of the pianoforte, Neta Samaroﬀ, gave a concert in behalf of the German hospital yesterday afternoon at the Auditorium that approximately brought in \$10,000, allowing \$10,000 for the noble charity for which it was planned. The audience was rather phlegmatic. The gallant Scotti was selected to break the ice with a reading of "Paeleed" that seemed comparatively tame, as the genial baritone has as yet happily succumbed to the flirtatious fripperies of the concert stage.

It was a stunning example, however, of vocal staidity and, from that point of view, was satisfactory to the dilettante. Miss Farrar's group of French songs seemed more to the fancy of the audience. France's Nocturne, Fauré's "Butterfly" and the air from Debussy's "L'Enfant Prodigue" were beautifully given and revealed the fair young singer in an entirely new light, as her previous ap-

A typical American caricature of musical artists.



Factory where he found me playing Liszt's *Liebestraum* to several thousand employees. He had at least one adventure to relate when he returned to Budapest!

It cannot be denied that the many demands made upon the concert artist outside of his arduous work often went beyond the limit of his time and strength. Playing in the concert series of an American school or college often meant shaking hands with the entire audience. Standing in the receiving line of receptions given by clubs rivaled the hand-shaking duties of the politician. I once asked a political leader in Washington if he ever attempted to remember the names of people he met at such affairs. His answer was, "No, but it is always safe to use the formula 'I am so glad to see you *again*.'"

I tried that when I returned to a certain city where I had—as it seemed to me—shaken hands with the entire population the year before. Unluckily one very prominent citizen had been out of town on the occasion of my former visit. She was a peppery elderly lady, and when I tried the politician's formula on her, she said, "You never saw me before and you know it!" I never tried to use it again.

I shall never forget poor Ravel at his first American reception. The famous composer of the exciting *Bolero* was a very small, retiring man, and he looked so utterly bewildered and helpless in a receiving line of ladies (who all happened to be very tall) that I decided to give him a fortifying cup of tea. His look, as he gratefully accepted it, was indescribable and then he said, "*Merci, Madame, je ne comprends rien.*" That sentence included the English language, the reception, the general habits and customs of America—in short, I never heard so much meaning packed into six words.

My father once decided to surprise me by attending a concert in a city not far from St. Louis, where my family was living. The crowd in the artist's dressing-room after the concert was typical of what the artist encounters at the close of every performance. Such a crowd invariably includes—besides those who are normally and sincerely congratulatory—a few overenthusiastic people who gush in a foolish way. In the midst of trying to cope with the situation I heard a woman say, "Would you not like to stand where you can see her hands?" I could hardly believe my ears when my father's voice responded dryly, "No, thank you. I have seen her hands often enough, and her feet, too."

The remark fell like a bombshell among the bystanders, who had no idea who my father was. After explanations had provided recovery from the shock, my father was carried off to a large reception given in my honor by the club which sponsored the local concert series.

The receiving line was very long, and after having duly "met" me, my father, a complete stranger to all except those who had happened to be in the green-room, was handed down the line from lady to lady. Each time one introduced him to another, his peculiar name was slightly altered. As he expressed it when I found him chuckling in a corner at supper, "I started out Hickenlooper and wound up Houlahan."

The suppers at these club affairs were often elaborate, but whatever else they might include or lack, coffee was always served in large quantities. Being so constituted that a large cup of coffee could keep me awake for a week, I always had visions of the entire company tossing about sleepless for the rest of the night. When the buffet table decorations were particu-

larly elaborate, sandwiches were often subtly designed to follow a color scheme, and then, as a rule, nothing but the sense of smell could reveal the ingredients of which they were made. But back of it all there was something warm and friendly and human that was as peculiar to America as the midnight coffee orgy.

Pre-war musical "celebrities" were expected to live in a certain style in this country, and they usually traveled in state. "Box-office attractions" often used a private car. Less affluent "legitimate artists" contented themselves with pullman drawing-rooms. The singers and string players traveled with an accompanist engaged for the season. The pianist was accompanied by a tuner who looked after the instruments he used. These pianos (usually two or three concert grands that had been assigned to the artist for the season) were alternately shipped to the cities where his concerts took place. The expense of all this was borne by the piano firm whose instruments were used by the pianist.

In addition, the local agent of the piano firm sent—again without charge—a small grand for practice purposes to the artist's hotel in every city where he played. These conditions are worth recording because they no longer exist, but in the good old days before the war, the practice piano in the hotel solved a problem in America that was often acute in Europe. As a rule, good European hotels would not permit any piano practice at all.

When in Europe, pianists either lived in lodgings or, if they stopped in hotels, did their work in the studios and houses of friends, or in a place provided by the firm whose pianos they played. The only time I ever remember practicing as much as I liked in a European hotel was on one occasion at the Bristol in

Vienna. The management put me and my piano next door to a baron who did not pay his bills. The hotel got rid of the baron.

In my mind, pre-war American hotels were divided into three categories: very good, fair to middling, and the kind that had ropes beside the windows by means of which one was supposed to lower oneself to the ground in case of fire. In hotels of this lowest type (which were relics of the past), everything from the wallpaper to the food was dreadful. The ropes had a deadly fascination for me. I was obsessed by a desire to see how they worked. On one occasion this wish was almost fulfilled. My mother and I had to spend the night in a small middle-western town near a college where I had given a recital. About two o'clock in the morning we were awakened by a loud clanging of bells. We both shrieked "fire" and I dashed for the ropes. My mother restrained me, however, and insisted that we should first see whether the halls were too full of smoke for a less hazardous exit. A cautious investigation revealed no smoke whatsoever, so we gathered up our money and jewelry, threw coats over our nightdresses and hurriedly descended by way of a peaceful and deserted stairway. In the office a sleepy individual in undershirt and trousers was lazily chewing gum. With considerable agitation we inquired where the fire was. "What fire?" asked the man. "We certainly heard a fire alarm," said my mother with offended dignity. "Oh, them bells," said the man calmly. "Them's for the train east."

Apparently the only guests of this hotel, as a rule, were traveling salesmen who had to be awakened *en masse* for "the train east." We met them on the stairway as we beat a crest-fallen retreat to our rooms.



The identical furnishings of the bedrooms in the modern Statler hotels in various cities made one feel very much at home, but on one occasion they caused me a moment of considerable perplexity. On the low-boy in each bedroom one found a Gideon Bible (placed by the Gideon Society) and a pincushion with carefully assorted pins and threaded needles for mending. One somehow felt that if a pin were removed, another would immediately grow in its place. I always used my own pins, however, for the pincushion and the Bible were so associated in my mind that removing a pin would have seemed almost as bad as tearing a page out of the Bible.

As I awakened one dark winter morning, the sight of the familiar pincushion and the Bible acquainted me with the fact that I was in a Statler hotel, but where? I was in the midst of a tour of seventy concerts. The handbag which contained my route book had been lost and I could not for the life of me remember which city I was in. I did what one always does in an American hotel, no matter what one needs or wants—I reached for the telephone. The operator informed me that I was in Cleveland. The tone of her voice was mildly reproachful and I seemed to hear between the words—"and so early in the day!"

In the business end of the career there was not so very much difference between life in Europe and life in America for the musical artist, except the size of the fees, which were higher in the United States than anywhere in Europe. The same captains of industry in the shape of all-powerful managers dominated the concert world on both continents. Mayer in London and Wolff in Berlin were the counterparts of Wolfsohn in New York. I did not find an Ellis in Europe. He was unique.

The routine of a concert tour was taxing and none too en-

joyable at times, but the excitement of the actual performances as well as the variety of surroundings and amusing incidents served to relieve the tedium. One of the daily and sometimes diverting features of an artist's life in America, then as now, was an influx of letters from perfect strangers. One of the most touching I remember was from a prospective mother in Pittsburgh, describing at length her hopes for her expected progeny. The child was sure to be a girl, she wrote, because a fortune-teller had told her so. The writer of the letter had always tried to play the piano, but apparently the results had not been satisfactory. She had, however, already decided that her daughter was to be a great pianist. In her imagination, this enterprising parent was doubtless already sitting in the midst of a great crowd awaiting the entry of her famous daughter—in a dazzling evening gown—upon the stage. The playing of the daughter in these dreams was beyond question such as the world had never heard before, and the enthusiasm of the vast audience was delirious. The child was to be named "Olga Samaroff," the latter continued, and the mother hoped I "would not mind." The only thing anybody could mind was a certain lack of harmony between "Olga Samaroff" and the family name, Crowley, but I decided that there was plenty of time to point that out before the announcement of a debut concert. I sent a pair of pink booties to Olga Samaroff Crowley with my blessings. In due time I received another communication from Mrs. Crowley. The fortune-teller had overlooked a husky boy who accompanied the expected girl upon her arrival in this world. Nothing daunted, the mother of the twins named the girl Olga and the boy Sammy. Of course I immediately sent a pair of blue booties and for several years I exchanged occasional greetings with Olga

and Sammy. One day a note I had sent was returned unopened. The Crowley family had retreated behind the curtain of mystery that separates us from the things we shall never know. I only hope Olga and Sammy are playing well on two pianos for the delectation of their mother.

In the midst of all the traveling, the business problems, the social demands and the odd experiences, my real life was—music.

Ellis in his managerial capacity and my mother in daily life smoothed my path as much as possible.

As I gained understanding, technical mastery and stage experience, I found immense satisfaction in the fact that it was my privilege to reveal the beauty of the music I loved, at least as far as I was capable of doing it, to my audiences.

When people talked of music as a means of "self-expression" for the artist, it sounded as absurd as though they should assert that the universe had been created in order to provide some individual with the possibility of using his senses.

It became quite clear to me that the function of *interpretation* is not only the sole *raison d'être* of the musical performer, but also his highest approach to music. It is relatively unimportant to the world what the individual performer experiences in the way of emotion, but it is enormously important if his emotional force can breathe life into a great musical masterpiece that only exists for the listener through re-creation in sound. This bringing to life of music is worth all the work a musician must do in order to accomplish it. Digging down into the beauties of music and preparing myself for the ideal function in which I so strongly believed gave me more joy than the public performance itself, although I was very sensitive to the currents that flow back and

forth between an audience and an artist on the stage. In general I was exaggeratedly self-critical, but on the rare occasions when I was in the form to do the best of which I was capable, all else was forgotten and I learned to know the intoxication of making music under conditions that call into play everything an artist has to give.

How much further I might have progressed as a pianist if I had devoted myself to my concert career with an undivided allegiance, no one will ever know. In 1911 I terminated my contract with Ellis and gave up the whole thing (as I thought permanently) in order to be married to Leopold Stokowski.

"Just like a woman," said Ellis, who made no secret of his disappointment. "Just like my daughter," responded my mother, who knew her headstrong offspring.

I was very much in love, and was quite willing to agree that it was too difficult to combine marriage and a career. Such are the decisions that seem to be so much a question of human will at the time, and so much a matter of destiny as one looks back at them through the vista of intervening years.

## 5

# BEHIND THE SCENES OF AN AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

---

THE GROUP of people gathered around the Mixters' hospitable board in Boston one evening early in the year 1906 was engaged in animated conversation. Dr. Mixer, a famous surgeon, and his charming wife were in the habit of giving Saturday night suppers after the Boston Symphony concerts. The conductor of the orchestra and his family, the soloist of the occasion and various Boston orchestra devotees, were always invited.

I had been talking to a vivacious lady whose dimples rivaled her Viennese accent in charm. In pauses of the conversation I could hear her husband, sitting just behind us, telling a long story in halting English. The heroine of the story seemed to be a woman who persisted in turning up in the most unexpected places during recent travels in Europe. Finally we heard the sentence, "*Ve valked into de kitchen of de Sviss hotel and she vas . . .*" My companion tossed the word "dere" over her shoulder, and her husband, as though catching a ball, finished

up his story with an obedient "dere." Thus did Mrs. Wilhelm Gericke keep a weather ear out for her husband's linguistic difficulties. His English was still undependable despite the many years of residence in the United States during which he had been conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

I had been soloist at the concert preceding the supper. It was my first engagement with a great orchestra, and I was not only filled with the delight of an exciting musical experience but with gratitude for the kind way in which Mr. Gericke—realizing my inexperience—had helped me through the ordeal. Mrs. Gericke, with whom it is said Brahms was once very much in love, fascinated me. I little thought at the time that what I learned from Ellis of her life and position in Boston would one day serve me as a model in my own existence, but I marveled at the charm and tact she displayed.

It was Mr. Gericke's last season in Boston. I never knew the reasons for his departure. Whatever they were, there was no atmosphere of discontent, friction or resentment in the attitude of the Gerickes, and I could well believe what Charles Ellis, manager of the Boston Orchestra, always said, that Mrs. Gericke had been an ideal conductor's wife and a great help to her husband.

It was not so easy to be a conductor's wife, as I found when my second marriage in 1911 threw me, so to speak, behind the scenes of an American symphony orchestra.

I have often been asked in Europe why the symphony orchestras in America have reached such a high state of perfection. Credit for pioneer work in the introduction of serious symphonic music into the United States undoubtedly belongs to Theodore Thomas and Leopold Damrosch. Historians and contemporary

critics lavish praise upon their achievements. But tastes and standards change; contemporary criticism reflects existing taste and it is difficult to know—in later periods—whether musical performance that has been praised in one era would arouse the enthusiasm of succeeding generations.

Without belittling pioneer achievements, I am inclined to have confidence in the assertion of older musicians (whose experience extended back to the Thomas-Damrosch days) that it was Wilhelm Gericke who first established the high standard of perfection in symphonic performance which gives America a distinguished superiority in this field.

It is certain that from 1905 to 1911, when I was constantly playing—as piano soloist—with every major orchestra in the United States, the Boston Symphony outstripped them all in beauty of tone, perfection of ensemble and other qualities which can be summed up in the word “greatness.”

This assertion is not merely the expression of personal opinion. The musical world in general conceded the superiority of the Boston Symphony Orchestra at that time, and most musicians agreed that the technical and tonal quality of the orchestra had been created by Gericke.

Colonel Higginson, founder of the orchestra, is one of those Americans who might have been a musician if the psychology of his time had not decreed that the profession was undesirable for a man. He was musically gifted. Talent, being a natural spiritual force, might be likened to a torrent of water, inasmuch as both can be diverted from one channel into another. Education and environment create the channels of talent. Sometimes the sheer force of talent will break through the dam of circumstance and find its way back to its natural channel, but if it has

found an outlet that is not too unsympathetic, its possessor usually accepts the life direction that education and environment have created.

If Colonel Higginson ever seriously considered the possibility of becoming a professional musician while he studied music in Vienna, he abandoned the idea. When he took his place as a leading Boston financier, the musical side of his nature found an outlet in the development of the great orchestra that remains a monument to his musical ideals, vision and public-spirited generosity.

At the time Colonel Higginson studied music in Vienna, the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra was generally considered the greatest orchestra in Europe. It was then and there that he formed his musical ideals. He later imported orchestral instruments from Vienna, and at the proper psychological moment in the development of his Boston orchestra he engaged the Viennese conductor, Wilhelm Gericke, who had something approaching genius as an orchestral drillmaster. Thus the perfection attained by the Boston Symphony under Gericke may be advanced as one logical reason for the fact that in this particular field of musical endeavor, America has rivaled and even excelled Europe. There was no radio broadcasting in Gericke's time, but the Boston Symphony Orchestra traveled. Its artistic standards spread in this manner throughout the country. The quality of Boston Symphony concerts—in cities where other orchestras existed or were being formed—spurred all similar organizations to redoubled efforts. Established orchestras could not afford to lag too far behind; new ones had a high example to follow.

The engagement of Charles Ellis as manager of the Boston



Orchestra had assured an executive direction of its affairs that matched its artistic development. A less able manager could scarcely have put into effect Colonel Higginson's determination to have a non-union orchestra. The Boston Symphony was then—and still is—the only non-union symphony orchestra in the United States.

The great advantage of a non-union orchestra lies in the fact that its policies cannot be dictated by outsiders. The union policy that seeks to protect the interests of local musicians by forbidding the importation of outsiders is difficult to reconcile with the purely artistic objective of obtaining the finest player no matter where he is.

One disadvantage of the non-union orchestra is that union men cannot be engaged for performances that require more than the usual number of players. Another is that the members of a non-union orchestra cannot obtain employment elsewhere during the summer, inasmuch as all hotel, theatre, movie and radio orchestras are union organizations.

Whereas the major union orchestras offer twenty-five- or thirty-week contracts to musicians, leaving to them the problem of finding employment during the summer, the Boston Symphony must keep its members busy throughout the year, or remunerate them on the basis of yearly employment. Before the World War this problem was solved for the Boston Symphony—at least to a certain extent—by concert tours under Ellis's highly successful management and by "pop" concerts in the late spring and early summer in Boston. That Colonel Higginson generously balanced the budget through personal gifts whenever necessary is generally understood. The extent of his benefactions may never be known.

The existence of a symphony orchestra in every country requires financial support above and beyond its income from the sale of tickets. Apparently, if such an orchestra is good in quality, it cannot be self-supporting. Hall rentals, printing, advertising, and above all the salaries of good orchestra conductors and players, combine—as in the case of the various elements of opera—to form a prohibitive overhead expense which invariably exceeds the possible revenue from the sale of tickets. In Europe it was never expected that such artistic enterprises should be self-sustaining. Occasionally co-operative undertakings managed to keep afloat, but state subsidy or princely patronage usually assured the existence of operas and orchestras alike.

This problem has always been much greater in the United States than in Europe because the total cost—and therefore the size of the deficit—has been much higher. Salaries in the United States have had to match the standards of living and the prevailing earning power in other fields. The psychology that governed “importation of the best” in pre-war days screwed up the fees of famous singers and instrumentalists to dizzy heights. The lot of the pre-war European musicians, who reaped this rich harvest and (invariably taking the first available boat after their last performance) proceeded to spend or invest their American earnings in Europe, was an enviable one.

The artistic excellence of a symphony orchestra depends not only upon the caliber of its players but also upon its rehearsal conditions. What the conductor does with the orchestra in the interpretation of music is another matter, but even the greatest leader is helpless if his players are poor or if he lacks the opportunity for adequate rehearsal. I learned these truths as I witnessed the transformation of the Philadelphia Orchestra from a

third-rate symphonic organization to one of the world's greatest orchestras.

I had played with the Philadelphia Orchestra under its first conductor, Fritz Scheel, in 1906. The orchestra—then six years old—already contained many fine players who remained within its ranks throughout later developments, but inferior musicians were sufficiently numerous to create a distressing inequality. There were weak spots in most of the choirs, as well as poor rehearsal conditions.

In 1907 I was engaged to play an unfamiliar concerto of Edward Schütt with the orchestra in Philadelphia and New York. I had never heard the concerto with orchestra. The concerts of the Philadelphia Orchestra took place then as now in the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, but rehearsals at that time were held in a room on North Broad Street. The orchestra completely filled this room. The ceiling was low and there was no space for sound projection. The orchestra could practice notes under such conditions, but no idea of tonal balance could be obtained. At the rehearsal of the Schütt concerto I played on an upright piano placed in a corner of the room. I could not hear the orchestra as a whole, and the orchestra could not hear me at all. The results may be imagined.

Fritz Scheel was an earnest and experienced musician. He had been engrossed in the pioneer work of organizing a new orchestra. Lack of funds had necessitated many a compromise, and he was probably so glad to have an orchestra that he was quite prepared to overlook imperfect conditions. This was true of many other conductors. Orchestral conducting only began to be an art in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Before that the conductor had been a time-beater rather than an interpreter.

Many routine European conductors at the time of which I write had retained enough of the old tradition to be content to hold things together and carry out the printed directions of the score without sensing or attempting to convey the subtler things that always lie between the lines of our imperfect musical notation. Uninspired conductors will probably continue to miss the greatest possibilities of the scores they interpret. They have always been workmen rather than artists.

The second director of the Philadelphia Orchestra—Pohlig—had a better baton technique than Scheel, but his conducting was earthbound and uninspired.

A curious situation existed in Philadelphia in the first decade of the century. Some Philadelphians wanted a Philadelphia orchestra. Others stoutly maintained that the series of concerts given by the Boston Symphony in Philadelphia quite sufficed for the musical needs of the city. To this opposing faction a Philadelphia orchestra meant civic extravagance. Many American cities went through the same process of internal strife.

In Cleveland, Ohio, Adella Prentiss Hughes, one of the most far-sighted and public-spirited local musical managers in the United States, went about the creation of a Cleveland orchestra in an ideal way. First she organized a yearly series of symphony concerts by visiting orchestras with the avowed purpose of creating a public for orchestral music. She carried out this plan until she felt the right moment had come, and then she interested a group of leading citizens in the creation of a Cleveland orchestra. She engaged the young Nikolai Sokoloff, now head of the W. P. A. Music Project, as conductor, and with the financial support of Mr. John L. Severance and others, the Cleveland Orchestra came into being. Sokoloff built the orchestra—most



*Leopold Stokowski at the time of his marriage to the author.*



successfully—and Mr. Severance donated a splendid hall in which it could play. The Cleveland Orchestra is the most striking example of the deliberate planning of a development that “just happened” in many other cities.

The orchestral Montagues and Capulets of musical Philadelphia were still waging war when Leopold Stokowski became conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1912. For a time even he was regarded with disfavor by the “antis.” I once heard a lady of the anti-Philadelphia-Orchestra faction assert in the course of a heated argument that the only reason why “that man Stokowski” conducted “without his notes” was that he “could not read a score”!

When Stokowski began his activities as conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, he immediately protested against the inadequate rehearsal room in North Broad Street. He strove to make it clear to the board of directors why really fine artistic results were impossible under such conditions. His reasons could be but imperfectly grasped by men who were not musicians and who were chiefly preoccupied with the problem of making both ends meet financially, but the directors were already aware of Stokowski's genius as a conductor and an arrangement was soon made by which rehearsals were officially transferred to the Academy of Music where the concerts were given. This enabled Stokowski to achieve a very different tonal balance.

The terms of the agreement, however, were loose enough to permit the Academy authorities to turn the orchestra out if the hall was needed for something else. This happened so frequently that Stokowski became more and more exasperated. One Saturday evening, after a concert, matters reached a crisis. He called for the manager of the Academy and once more endeavored to

make it clear why the finest results in orchestral playing could not be obtained without proper rehearsing conditions. Finally he said: "I *must* know whether we can rehearse in the Academy before the next concert. If not, I shall resign."

At that point a gentleman tapped Stokowski on the shoulder and said: "I have heard your conversation. I know nothing about music but I think I understand. You want to do a certain piece of work; you need to have the right tools to work with. Am I right? If that is what you ask, you shall have it."

The gentleman was Edward Bok. The occasion was the beginning of his interest in the Philadelphia Orchestra which eventually led to the raising of an endowment fund of two million dollars by public subscription. Edward Bok was the moving spirit and the largest individual donor in the undertaking.

The obstacles Stokowski inevitably encountered in the early stages of his conductorship in Philadelphia make it all the more remarkable that he was able in a very short time to create such a great orchestra.

In all that he did he had the full support of the greatly beloved president of the orchestra, Alexander van Rensselaer, and of the Women's Committees. In every district of the city and its suburbs, energetic women, led by Miss Frances Wister and inspired by the indefatigable work of such public-spirited citizens as Mrs. William Woodward Arnett, labored for the cause of the orchestra. Audiences which had been unsatisfactory before 1912, increased in size by leaps and bounds. Within three years, concerts were completely sold out wherever the orchestra appeared.

Most conductors with a pronounced gift as drillmasters have lacked inspiration. Again there have been conductors of pro-



nounced interpretative gifts who could obtain splendid results with an orchestra that had been well-trained by others, but who themselves never created, nor added to, the technical stature of an orchestra. Stokowski possessed in the highest degree the combined gifts of the orchestral technician and the inspired interpreter. The success of his concerts, his phonograph recordings and his radio broadcasting have become a legend.

The status of an orchestral conductor in an American city is that of a civic personage. His correspondence is enormous. He is expected to make public speeches, to show himself on important occasions and to take a certain part in the social life of the city. Newspaper interviews, photographers and the signing of autographs never cease to form part of his daily routine. Mountains of new orchestral scores are submitted for his consideration; he is pursued by the relatives and friends of soloists who wish to appear with the orchestra; he is harassed by cranks. His is no easy position, for his actual musical duties without all these other things would tax the endurance of the strongest man.

Toscanini and Mahler are the only conductors—so far as I know—who managed to evade some of the non-musical demands made upon them in America. Mahler was a sick man and absorbed in composition. He dwelt in a world far away from the life about him. Toscanini, imperious and often irascible, did only what he chose to do. Apparently his gift for getting his own way equals his musical ability.

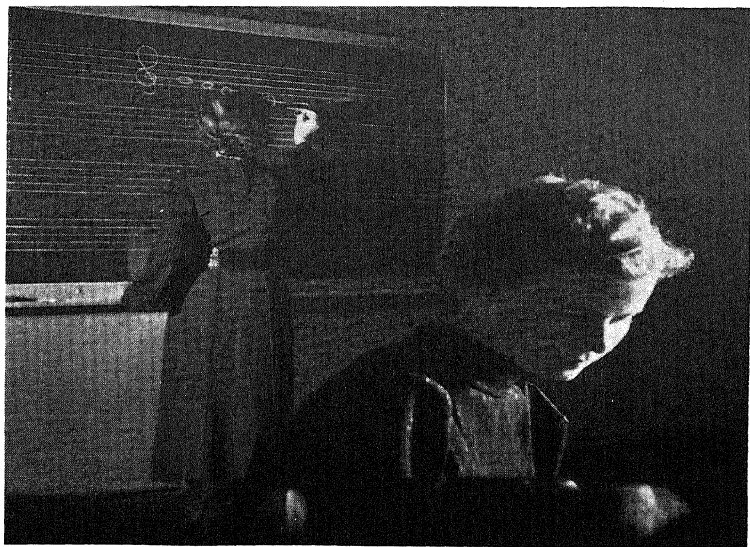
I cannot vouch for the truth of a story that was told in Salzburg several years ago, but it sounds probable and, if it is true, forms a good example of Toscanini's capacity to impose his will on all occasions. The story is that at the rehearsal of a certain opera in Salzburg, Toscanini objected to the sky drop of a

stage set. "I want another sky," announced the impatient maestro. Every effort to pacify him, to explain the difficulty of obtaining another sky and to induce him to proceed with the rehearsal failed. "Another sky," was his only response. Finally he laid down his baton and exclaimed, "Another sky, or I leave." According to the story "another sky" was brought from Vienna.

It is doubtful whether even Toscanini and Mahler could have succeeded in defying American ideas of a conductor's civic obligations if they had directed an orchestra *in the making*, or worked in a more American city. New York is vast and cosmopolitan. It is too large to have a unified civic life. Moreover, the New York Philharmonic is an old, established orchestra, the second oldest in the world. Problems in Philadelphia were very different.

Even the wife of an orchestral conductor in such an American city finds herself in the midst of considerable demands on time and strength. Ellis had given me such a clear picture of Mrs. Gericke's accomplishments in Boston that I had a great ambition to emulate what she had done. In addition, my knowledge of the efforts that were being made to build up the Philadelphia Orchestra in the early years of my residence there filled me with zeal. During my first winter in Philadelphia, I received and returned about seven hundred calls. In those days the custom of paying visits still prevailed, and I had some strange experiences in the course of my calling expeditions.

One of them is unusual enough to be recorded. I was returning the call of a lady who lived in North Philadelphia. I had never met her, but her card had been left at my house. A buxom Negress answered the doorbell when I rang and asked whether Mrs. X were at home. She replied in the affirmative and ushered



*Miss Harriett Johnson, Artistic Director of the Layman's Music Courses, giving dictation at the piano to a Layman pupil.*



*An interested Layman's Music Course Class at the David Mannes Music School.*



me into a darkened room, evidently a seldom-used parlor, where she left me.

For a long time I waited patiently. I could hear the footsteps of someone moving about on the second floor, and I pictured the mistress of the house changing her dress, fixing her hair and powdering her nose. Mentally, I added a change of shoes and stockings to the list as the period of waiting grew longer. Gradually I came to the conclusion that no mortal could possibly need so much time for personal adornment. I looked about in vain for a bell. I had a taxicab waiting at the door and anxiety about the inevitably mounting figures registered on the taximeter increased my impatience.

Finally I went out and rang the doorbell again.

The same Negress appeared, looking more stolid than ever. I asked, as politely as my emotions permitted, whether she had not told me Mrs. X was at home.

"Yes'm," she replied, "Ah done tole you she's here. She's havin' a baby right now, yes'm."

Among social duties, receptions were numerous during my first year in Philadelphia. The inhabitants of the Quaker City are proverbially disinclined to take strangers to their bosoms, but when they do, nothing could exceed their hospitality. While I appreciated and enjoyed the warm welcome of the city, weariness occasionally overtook me after shaking hands with a large crowd. On one occasion I must have looked very tired, because a good Samaritan insisted upon my sitting down and having a cup of tea. I gratefully sank into the nearest chair and did not even have the energy to look up when a man came and stood before me. Mechanically I grasped his hand and shook it. The man turned out to be a highly astonished waiter.

Before the end of the first year I had come to feel entirely at home in Philadelphia and I had a host of new and highly valued friends. Life "behind the scenes of a symphony orchestra" proved to be most interesting, and at times exciting.

The personnel of the Philadelphia Orchestra was typical of American conditions before the World War. Most members of the orchestra were European. Just as certain countries are famous for special fruits and flowers, various European nations seemed to produce certain special types of orchestral players. Holland was *par excellence* the land of cellists. Belgium and France produced the finest wood-wind players, Germany was famous for its brass players, while Slavic or Austro-Hungarian violinists sang their way into the American orchestras. Absorbing the best players from many different countries is one secret of the rapidly acquired superiority of American symphony orchestras. The concert master of the Philadelphia Orchestra was an American—Thaddeus Rich—but he had a considerable European experience behind him. There were some American-born players of foreign origin, but in the main the orchestra personnel was European.

I well remember the day during the World War when I was asked to organize the sale of Liberty bonds on the square of the City Hall in Philadelphia. The booth was one of the most important in town because of the central location. I recruited a bevy of attractive debutantes to assist me; Alma Gluck came over from New York to harangue the populace, and I had a number of brass players from the Philadelphia Orchestra to call attention to our patriotic enterprise by playing the national anthem and popular war songs. All went well until, in the midst of a flourishing business, my ear was caught by a steady stream of German

conversation. My brass players were sitting on the curb peacefully conversing in the tongue of the enemy. I remonstrated several times, only to have them forget and begin again. Between selling bonds and striving to stem the flow of German conversation, I had a busy afternoon.

The custom of engaging foreigners for symphony orchestras extended to conductors. Walter Damrosch is the only outstanding conductor of the pre-war period who can be called American, but even he was born of German parents in Breslau, Germany. As a rule, when an orchestra needed a conductor, somebody was sent to Europe to get one. In this field—as in that of the opera singer and the concert soloist—the American musician had no opportunity to gain experience or to begin a career in the United States. Unless we know the truth of these pre-war conditions, we can never realize the extent and exciting significance of the changes that have taken place since 1914.

Since the World War, a young conductor, Léon Barzin, born in Belgium of a Belgian father and a French mother, but entirely educated in the United States where he arrived when he was two years of age, has achieved success in such a characteristically American enterprise that no picture of the orchestral world would be complete without it. The National Orchestral Association of New York, unique as a *training orchestra*, was founded in 1920 by Mrs. E. H. Harriman with the able cooperation of Franklin Robinson and Chalmers Clifton, its first conductor. When the association was formed there was scant opportunity for young orchestra players to obtain adequate experience, but the increasing number of gifted American musicians of this type had already made it obviously inadvisable to fill vacancies in the major orchestras by importing Europeans.

Also immigration laws and union rules made importation more and more difficult. The National Orchestral Association has performed a most valuable service. Players from its ranks are to be found in every American orchestra. After Mrs. Harriman's death and Mr. Clifton's resignation, Mrs. Cary, daughter of that great American patron of music, Henry Harkness Flagler, became president and young Léon Barzin became conductor. As a member of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, young Barzin went through the best apprenticeship a conductor can have. He played under many great conductors, including Toscanini. He is now taking a high place among the younger conductors in America.

After I had become familiar with the workings of a symphony orchestra, it always amused me to hear people judge the merits of an orchestra in terms of age. Even professional music critics sometimes seem to forget the fact that the personnel of an orchestra is in a constant state of flux. Death, illness and all kinds of circumstances connected with human life bring about changes. Sometimes a player gets an offer of a higher salary elsewhere; or the conductor may learn of a superlative player for a certain position and let a less valuable man depart at the expiration of his contract. Such things sometimes cause bitter feeling and a conductor is often torn between the desire to make the orchestra as fine as he can, and a human sympathy with the man who will suffer by a change. There may be as many as fifteen or twenty changes in a single season. Certainly the hundred-year-old orchestra is not composed of centenarian players.

Players in a symphony orchestra are not dependent upon long association in the sense that renders it so necessary for members



of a string quartet. The simple reason is that an orchestra is musically directed. The conductor of an orchestra supplies the elasticity of tempo which a string quartet must acquire through long association; he furnishes the dynamic plan which the members of a string quartet must discuss and decide upon in the course of numerous rehearsals; he interprets a composition according to his own ideas, whereas the members of a string quartet must effect a composite interpretation in which the individual member has a voice but must often compromise in order to arrive at an agreement with the others. In short, it may be said that the actual playing of an orchestra depends upon quality rather than age, and that the combination of superlative players and a great conductor could achieve results in a short time that would be forever unattainable to musicians of lesser caliber.

Jealousies, intrigues and other manifestations of human nature are bound to occur in any large group, but on the whole the orchestra players I have known have been most likable. Most musicians retain something of the child in their make-up, which often shows itself in a pronounced sense of humor and love of mischief. Like other musicians, orchestra players have the problem of whiling away long hours on the train during concert tours. Sometimes they gamble more than is good for their pocketbooks. At other times they amuse themselves playing pranks.

On one occasion a pre-war violinist of the Philadelphia Orchestra found an elaborate pink silk nightgown hanging in his hotel room in Pittsburgh. When he described his discovery to some of his colleagues, it was suggested that the nightgown be smuggled into the suitcase of an unfortunate cello-player who had a particularly jealous wife, just before the return of the or-

chestra to Philadelphia. The violinist accordingly packed the nightgown in his own bag pending the psychological moment for carrying out the proposed joke.

It was found there by his own irate wife. He had forgotten to transfer it to the luggage of the cellist.

The *esprit de corps* in the American orchestras has been excellent as a rule. The members may squabble among themselves, but they present a united front to the world and "our orchestra" becomes a matter of pride and importance to everybody—from the president to the baggage man. This spirit usually spreads to the entire city, and even occasions spirited rivalry between different communities.

I have written more about the Boston and Philadelphia Orchestras than others because I know more about them. All American symphony orchestras, however, had to solve the same problems in one way or another. The names Severance in Cleveland, Murphy in Detroit and Carpenter in Minneapolis signified in their respective cities a service to the cause of symphonic music that was similar in principle—even if not the same in scope and method—to what Higginson had done for Boston.

As other orchestras witnessed the success of the Philadelphia organization under a young conductor whose sole previous experience had been three seasons in Cincinnati, they began to be less sure that it was absolutely necessary to import a middle-aged European conductor with two decades of routine behind him.

During the period of experimentation just after the war, which seemed to affect every phase of life, guest conductors came into vogue. This was chiefly because some of the outstanding established conductors found it too taxing to conduct throughout the

entire season and therefore demanded shorter contracts. Undoubtedly it is a great strain to prepare and conduct symphony concerts for twenty-five or thirty weeks, especially under American conditions, and it is understandable that conductors who were in a position to dictate their own terms strove to curtail the length of their contracts, but it was disastrous for the orchestras.

During Toscanini's tenure of office as chief conductor of the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Society, enthusiasm mounted to feverish heights and houses were sold out when he conducted, but subscribers were apt to give their tickets away when he departed. Even great conductors of international reputation suffered humiliating experiences as guest conductors of the Philharmonic Orchestra in New York during Mr. Toscanini's lengthy absences. The situation proved to be untenable.

Just as Charles Ellis had been the greatest manager in the United States until his retirement a few years after the World War, Arthur Judson has risen to a position of supreme power in the last fifteen years. At first manager of the Philadelphia Orchestra, he gradually extended his activities to individual artists and other orchestras.

Possibly because of his initial experiences in Philadelphia, he believes in young conductors who have the ambition and the vigor to throw themselves heart and soul into the exacting task of directing an American symphony orchestra. Ormandy in Philadelphia and Barbirolli in New York seem to be justifying the soundness of his policy.

Behind all the developments upon which I have touched, there is a fundamental reality that should be clear to all Americans. In building up the cultural life of a relatively new country certain possibilities and certain limitations become apparent. We

have imported many art treasures from the Old World, but if we wish to see St. Peter's we still have to go to Rome. We can strip Italian palaces of ceilings and woodwork (if Mussolini will let us) but San Gimignano remains perched upon its hill, and we have to go there to see it. In architecture, painting and sculpture, besides what we create ourselves in America, we must be content with a limited experience of the beauty of existing treasures through the medium of travel, purchase or reproduction.

In music it is different. We can both create music ourselves and enjoy all the great music of the past and of other lands in performances that may be just as good in a remote small town in the United States as in any world capital. Nothing prevents creating the necessary artistic conditions. Everything depends upon having people in a town or a city who care enough to build up a musical life for the community. Music is therefore peculiarly qualified to take a major place in the cultural life of the New World. Consciously or unconsciously, cultural pioneers in the United States have built upon the basis of this truth. In the domain of symphonic music they have succeeded more than in any other.

## 6

# MAKING PHONOGRAPH RECORDS

---

THERE WAS no doubt about it, the voice was mine and the voice had said "damn."

A convent education had kept my past free from the habit of indulging in profanity, and the above-mentioned experience was more effective than fifty commandments in preserving me from it for the rest of my life, but my one and only "damn" was called forth by my sixth abortive attempt to make a phonograph record of Mendelssohn's *Spring Song*. Following closely upon the last note, the naughty word had been duly recorded, and furnished a most unexpected close to the piece.

The day was hot and sultry. The recording studios of the Victor Talking Machine Company in Camden, New Jersey, were spacious but stifling on such a day, because the windows had to be kept tightly closed lest outside noises reach the recording apparatus. There was no air-conditioning. The engineers, in shirt sleeves, perspired freely and my garments clung to me like flypaper. I was not only warm but weary, for I had just finished a long concert tour, and I did not regard the making of several

records, called for by my contract with the Victor Talking Machine Company before my vacation in Europe could begin, as an unmixed blessing.

Artists usually lunched with officials of the company when they recorded in Camden. The meal that day had not agreed with me. I had yielded to the temptation of drinking too much of the wicked iced tea which lures its victims with a momentary sensation of coolness only to produce eventually an aggravated consciousness of the heat. Possibly the overindulgence in iced tea also accounted for the nervousness which caused me to play a wrong note or two in every record I made of Mendelssohn's *Spring Song*. When I played it through for the sixth time, there was not a single mistake until the very last measure, which there-upon brought forth my despairing "damn."

"Never mind, Madam," said one of the recording experts who officiated on such occasions, "the same thing happened to Caruso the last time he was here. He was ready to cry. It just gets you sometimes."

Even without heat and too much iced tea, there was something peculiarly unnerving about the buzzer that dominated life during the process of making phonograph records. After everything had been adjusted, and all possibility of outside noises eliminated (you had to be sure your piano stool did not squeak and reasonably certain you would not have to blow your nose), there would be two peremptory buzzes which meant "get ready"; they were followed by a minute of suspense during which you reached an agonized conviction that you did not know a single note of the piece you were going to play; finally a single, fateful buzz started you off as though someone gave a violent shove to a sled at the top of a steep toboggan slide.

If you made a mistake, the record was useless for the market, but the patient recorders were willing to play it through for you if you wished to study your shortcomings and learn what to avoid next time. Occasionally, when you had played your best and were indulging in a little private exultation, a head would be poked out of the recording booth and you would be informed that there was a mechanical flaw, whereupon your good playing was scrapped and you began all over again.

It was when my sixth record of the Mendelssohn *Spring Song* had been spoiled by wrong notes in the last measure and was being played through for me with its startling "damn" at the end, that I was seized with a violent rebellion against pieces that had been imposed upon me. Recording was young during the World War. Electric recording had not been perfected and experimentation was going on in every direction. From the first, however, the musicians and the recording companies were engaged in a long-drawn-out conflict. The *casus belli* was the choice of music to be recorded. The musicians wanted to record great music; the recording companies demanded popular music. The true musician does not belittle any music that is good of its kind. The enormous value of folk-music is incontestable, and the world would be a dreary place without the enlivening gayety of good popular music. Nevertheless, the highly developed musician naturally places the masterpieces composed by the world's greatest musical geniuses above all else, and his highest function is to interpret them. It was the desire to do this rather than anything approaching contempt for popular music that formed the basis of his attitude in connection with making records.

The opera singers had a relatively easy time, although even they were lured by the almighty dollar into sentimental render-

ings of songs like "The Little Gray Home in the West," which earned fortunes for all concerned. But at least many really good operatic arias came within the category of "popular music." Relatively few great instrumental compositions did.

Orchestras, string quartets and solo instrumentalists battled with manifold difficulties. Aside from the question of popularity, the compositions they particularly wished to record were usually too long to fit the time limit of the record. The largest record only played four minutes and fifty seconds for each side of the disk. Unless the musician was willing to make inartistic cuts, long compositions necessitated a series of records that were unpopular at that time because they were too expensive and—according to the prevailing psychology—too "highbrow" for the general public.

It was therefore always imperative to search for short pieces, and sometimes it was necessary to resist temptation of a mercenary nature. For instance, the Victor Talking Machine Company invited me to make a record of the *Moonlight Sonata* of Beethoven. It was affirmed that this was one of the few "highbrow" classics that would surely have a big sale. The name was familiar to everybody and then there were those lovely stories about the blind girl in the moonlight, etc., which could accompany the record in a pamphlet. This sonata had human interest, I was informed in a business-like typewritten letter from the company. Nobody seemed to heed my argument that the lovely stories had no real foundation, but when I found that the first movement lasted over five minutes and could not be recorded without cuts or undue haste, I simply refused to do it. The movement played in the traditional tempo was too long for one



side of a record and too short to fill both sides. To me, the nature of the music forbade a faster tempo, and I refused to make cuts.

Several years later Harold Bauer reaped the harvest I had sacrificed without any unworthy artistic compromise. He simply found an old edition of the sonata in which the first movement was marked *alla breva*.\* As the first thirteen measures of the first movement in the original manuscript have been lost, it is quite possible that the tempo indication of the old edition Bauer found is correct. In any case, it enabled him to make the record with a good conscience for he gained the conviction that the faster tempo was the right one.

Very often a battle with the company on the choice of music would result in a sort of compromise. For instance, they would let me play a Rhapsody of Brahms if I would consent to record the *Spring Song* of Mendelssohn. I never agreed to anything below a certain artistic level, but I always chafed at wasting the making of a record on an innocuous composition. The more I played that cheerful *Spring Song*, the more innocuous it seemed. The record I finally made of it is probably the coolest rendition it has ever had.

The policy of recording "popular music" was by no means confined to American companies. My first battle on the subject of a choice of music for recording occurred when I was engaged to make records in 1908 for the Welte-Mignon Company at Freiburg in Baden, Germany. There were long negotiations on the subject. Finally an equal number of compositions from the list I had submitted and from the company's list were chosen.

\* A time indication in music whereby the four beats of a measure are speeded up to produce the effect of two main pulses instead of four.

The company's choice included piano transcriptions of music from Rubinstein's ballet *Feramors*, the *Tannhäuser March*, and the *Peer Gynt Suite* of Grieg.

I did not make a compromise of artistic principle in accepting an arrangement whereby the company had its way in choosing half of the recorded compositions. It was merely a compromise of taste. The music they chose was perfectly respectable, only I never liked transcriptions of orchestral music on the piano and would have preferred selections from the rich musical literature of my own instrument. On the other hand, the music the company wanted to record could only be played as transcribed for the piano in this particular case because the Welte-Mignon was a player piano and could not record orchestral tone. In addition, the company assumed all the financial risk of making the records and putting them on the market. Artists are not often clever in business matters, but Ellis had taught me that in dealing with those who function on the commercial side of the musical profession, it is only fair to respect their claim to a reasonable return for their efforts or investment. Recording companies keep their finger upon the public pulse, and although they often make the mistake of underrating popular taste in connection with untried possibilities, the things they choose usually supply an existing demand and find a ready market.

The acoustical problems of phonograph recording still require a special technique of performance. In the old days, however, before electric recording was developed to the point of being usable, difficulties were still greater. Singers had to be moved about while singing so as to increase or lessen the distance between them and the recording apparatus according to the volume of tone they produced. An overloud tone caused "blasting,"

the recording studio term for the raucous sound it produced. The acoustical funnels hanging over a piano which transmitted the sound-vibrations to the wax matrix had to be very carefully placed. The difference of a hair's breadth in their position might cause certain tones to obtrude themselves with an unpleasant quality. A pianist in those days was obliged to operate within a very limited tonal gamut. A very soft tone did not record clearly, if at all. A *fortissimo* tone caused "blasting." Naturally the restraint necessitated by these limitations interfered with freedom of musical feeling. It was as though a painter were forced to work with a palette from which some of the most important colors had been removed.

It may be imagined how difficult it was to place an orchestra so that the relative distance of the different instruments from the recording funnels was so adjusted as to give them their rightful quality and degree of volume. When the history of recording is written, a high place of honor must be given to Leopold Stokowski. More than any other musician—so far as I know—he has studied the science of sound. Acoustical engineers have told me that he knows more about recording and broadcasting than many a scientific expert. He has definite ideas on the problems of recording, broadcasting, and making sound films—all of which require a different technique—and he has already achieved remarkable results. Many people believe he will blaze a trail to new and important developments in the future of the sound-film.

The fear of "blasting" was uppermost in the minds of the recording engineers before electrical recording was perfected. "Tone down the pianist," was their slogan when making piano records. It is easy to imagine their consternation when I once insisted upon having a concert grand piano for a new batch of

Victor records instead of the small grand I had hitherto used. My decision to demand this innovation was made after a summer in Europe had fortified me in mind and body; otherwise I should never have had the courage. Perhaps my "damn" of the previous spring inclined the recording authorities to argue with me rather than to refuse outright. It was pointed out to me that Paderewski had once made records on a concert grand, but the "blasting" had been so disastrous that it had never been tried again. I was, however, filled with a dogged obstinacy. I was giving a good deal of time in the early autumn of that year to experimentation in electrical recording. The Victor Company needed the co-operation of an experienced concert pianist, and it was easy for me to go over to Camden as I lived in Philadelphia. The experiments proved to be a fascinating experience. They took place behind a series of doors that were heavily bolted and barred. The secrets of the method whereby Victor records were soon to be freed from certain serious limitations were well guarded.

As I learned in this way to know more about recording, I became convinced that the quality of records—even those made in the old way—would be much finer if the pianist used a concert grand piano instead of a smaller one. I knew I could produce the softest possible tone on a concert grand and that I need not play any louder than I chose to, but I also felt sure that the tone of the concert grand would be fuller and richer in recording. It was a question of quality—not volume. The engineers, however, mistrusted pianists. To them it seemed like giving a larger gun to the enemy. Finally I was told that I might try making records with a concert grand *if I would furnish the instrument*, but that the company would not put the records on the market unless

they were entirely satisfactory. This, of course, simply meant a truce because no records were ever put on the market without being approved by both parties—the musician and the recording company.

I thereupon set about having a Steinway concert grand sent to the Victor recording studios at Camden. It never occurred to me that I would encounter any difficulties. Ever since my first concert the Steinway firm had always provided me with anything I wanted in the way of pianos. I always considered the Steinway pianos the best and was never willing to use any other. In addition, a strong personal friendship had grown up between me and various members of the Steinway clan. With the full confidence of a "spoiled child" of the firm I wrote to the president, Mr. Frederick Steinway, requesting an interview and explaining its purpose. At the appointed hour I arrived at Steinway Hall to find various members of the firm assembled around a large table, which created an atmosphere calculated to terrify any mere woman. I soon perceived, however, that Mr. Frederick Steinway, one of the kindest and best friends I ever had, dreaded an interview in which he was obliged to say "no." He had summoned help.

Upon this occasion I had a glimpse of the ramifications of the industrial world, so closely allied with the art of music and yet so foreign to the artist. I had always taken those words "Steinway piano used" on my concert programs as a matter of course. I regarded them as merely informative. And yet those three words formed one of the main reasons why Steinway & Sons could not furnish concert grands for the making of Victor records. I had never realized the full significance of the phrase in the magic realm of advertising, without which no industry can exist.

Apparently the Victor Company could not or would not put "Steinway piano used" on records or advertising literature; therefore according to business ethics the company could not expect Steinway & Sons to furnish pianos free of cost for recording purposes, but had to purchase the pianos thus used.

I could now see the full meaning of the condition made by the company that I should "furnish the concert grand" for experimental records. It had seemed a simple matter to me, but those crafty engineers knew perfectly well what Steinway & Sons would do.

Meanwhile, my request—the first of its kind—had caused a considerable upheaval in Steinway Hall. I could not grasp all the business reasons why it could not be granted, but I did understand that while Steinway & Sons would send me concert grands for concert use to the North Pole, the South Pole or anywhere else, they were unable to send one to the Victor recording studios in Camden, New Jersey.

I did some quick thinking. I have always been impulsive, and, woman-like, I could not bear to be outwitted by those recording experts. Long before my Steinway friends finished their explanations and apologies, I had made up my mind to *buy* a concert grand.

After I had become the possessor of a magnificent instrument and made records upon it that convinced the doubting Thomases in Camden that my theory concerning the improved quality of tone was correct (the Victor Company proceeded to buy a concert grand of their own and use it in recording), I realized why artists so seldom own concert grands.

These huge instruments appear upon concert stages and disappear without any complications for the artist, but housing such

a colossus is quite another matter. No white elephant is more of a problem unless one inhabits an enormous house. Luckily my royalty check for the records I made upon my giant piano eventually enabled me to buy a summer home in which to put it. The house I bought in Seal Harbor, Maine, was small, but there was a large studio in a separate building which solved my piano problems.

Early in my musical career I had met the Thomas Edisons, and Mrs. Edison had engaged me for a private musicale at their place in Llewellyn Park, New Jersey. The great inventor loved music but had become very deaf, and it was pathetic to see this genius who had harnessed electricity and accomplished so many miracles, sitting with the tips of his fingers on the piano while I played. Through his fingers he got some of the vibrations his ears received so imperfectly.

I never forgot one thing he said to me in the course of a fascinating conversation. He had been showing me his workshop and discussing the experiments he was then making in the recording of sound. After playing through a new record he said thoughtfully, "I often wonder what all this is going to mean in the lives of musicians!"

It almost sounded as though he shared with many musicians a fear of the force he had unloosed in the world. Musicians were not alone in their distrust of the phonograph. There were also many laymen who consistently rejected "canned music," despite the rapid growth of the recording business.

"I would not have such a thing as a phonograph in my house," said one director of the Philadelphia Orchestra as late as 1919. "I am glad to have the orchestra make records as the royalties help to reduce the deficit, but I refuse to listen to them."

Making records brought many curious and some amusing experiences to the musician. It was somewhat startling to be told by your neighbor at a dinner party that he was in the habit of listening to you play every morning while he took his bath. Upon reflection you realized the poor man probably had very little time for records, but you also began to wonder how many baths your playing might be enlivening out in the great wide world.

I almost lost patience with a Turkish officer serving in the German army, when he insisted that he had heard me play in Constantinople. I assured him I had never been there—that he must be confusing me with another pianist. Then I learned that some of my records were frequently played in his father's harem.

Among various strange correspondents who wrote to me about my Victor records was the wife of a lighthouse keeper off the coast of Maine. When she described what records meant to her in the long winters during which she was cut off from the world, I was almost reduced to tears. Naturally I could not do otherwise than answer all her letters, send a signed photograph upon request and generally spend more time on this correspondence than I permitted myself to devote to deserving friends. One spring I learned that she had been very ill in the dead of winter. A doctor from the nearest town went out in a small boat at the risk of life and limb to the rocky islet upon which the lighthouse stood, only to find that the woman was suffering from lack of fresh air! Apparently she was not only cut off from the world, but hermetically shut up in the lighthouse.

When the rapid development of broadcasting caused a partial eclipse of the prosperity of phonograph companies, a curious



thing happened. The records of great music came into their own. Europe had taken the lead in recording great music. The American companies, thanks to the constant efforts of artists in that direction, had made a fair showing in the field of serious music, but until the above-mentioned eclipse, popular music had been the mainstay of the American recording business.

When the man in the street turned from the phonograph to the radio, the bottom fell out of the recording market. As the phonograph companies groped their way towards mergers with broadcasting companies, it became plainly apparent that while no further fortunes could be made with songs like "The Little Gray Home in the West," there was a growing public for albums of records in which symphonies, Lieder, chamber music works and other musical masterpieces were to be found. The increasing importation of foreign records had proved it. Slowly the policy swung around in the direction for which the pioneer recording artists had fought from the beginning.

Certain individuals within the Victor Talking Machine Company had also fought for the recording of important music. Among these was Dr. Frances Clark, a remarkable woman who accomplished wonders in building up the use of phonograph records in public schools throughout the United States. She deserves our national gratitude.

When the Carnegie Foundation began, within the last few years, to bestow phonographs and record collections upon schools, colleges and libraries, it seemed as though the dream of inventors and pioneers in this field had come true. The highest function of the recording of music is to provide the musician, the student, and the layman with the possibility of hearing music

that lies beyond his own powers of performance. In my *Layman's Music Book* I call the phonograph "the practice instrument of the listener."

Only by means of this miraculous agency can the layman learn to know musical masterpieces as the musician knows them. He can study them in detail and repeat them whenever he likes, thus acquiring a familiarity with the music that increases enjoyment a hundredfold.

It was really this possibility that saved the day for the recording of music when the radio threatened to engulf it. One may have to wait many months before hearing a broadcast of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony; one may be busy or otherwise prevented from listening when it is performed on the radio, but if one possesses a good record of the symphony, it is like having one's volume of Shakespeare on the shelf.

What printing did for literature, the phonograph can do for the propagation of good music. When I see a fine record library in the house of a lover of good music I am glad that it was my privilege to be among the artists who had a share in the early development of the recording of music.

# 7

## OFFSTAGE AT THE OPERA HOUSE

---

ALTHOUGH MY knowledge of life on the pre-war operatic stage can only be that of an observer, my many friends among opera singers, operatic conductors and members of opera boards have afforded me a peculiarly rich opportunity to find my way about the opera house. I have shared the struggles of singers at the beginning of their careers, I have heard the laments of singers whose star was setting, I have learned to know many of the problems of those who were at the zenith of their success, and I have witnessed the heroic efforts of anxious opera executives as they sought ways and means to meet the rising cost of operatic production.

If I had the choice of a punishment for my worst enemy, I could think of nothing short of physical torture that would more effectively satisfy a lust for revenge than to condemn him to the life of an opera singer.

In the minds of the uninitiated, especially in the United States before the World War, when "grand opera" had captured the imagination of the man in the street, the successful operatic star

floated from triumph to triumph on a wave of fat fees, flattery, flowers and festivities. In those days the glamour surrounding such an opera singer almost equaled that of the movie star to-day.

In reality, the life of an opera singer has always been a hard one. Added to incessant and intensive work, there is an element of uncertainty peculiar to the profession. No mortal knows what the morrow will bring, but few workers use such fragile tools as a singer.

Only nature can endow a human being with a beautiful voice, but it is, unhappily, quite possible for man to damage and even destroy nature's gift. During the opera singer's formative years the struggle to learn the right use of the voice not only involves hard work but grave risks. At all times there have been more charlatans among vocal teachers than in any other branch of the musical profession. They hover like vultures over the approach to the opera house.

The length of an opera singer's career—as well as the quality of his performance—necessarily depends upon the method of his voice production. A few voices—like Melba's—are “naturally placed,” but as a rule the human voice is the most baffling of musical instruments. No one can see or touch its mechanism. Because the opera singer must depend upon this mysterious instrument, his life is dominated by physical considerations. The slightest physical disability can mar his means of artistic expression, and the span of his successful professional activity is relatively shorter than that of any other type of musician. In fact, the brevity of his zenith rivals that of the sport star.

Like the sport star and the dancer, the opera singer is haunted by the fear of growing fat. If the tragedy of obesity overtakes

him, his performances come dangerously near to the line that divides the sublime from the ridiculous. There is no more melancholy sight in the world than a hungry and thirsty opera singer practicing the abstinence that is necessary to the preservation of an acceptable sky line. Before the war the public was not so ruthless as it now is in rejecting corpulence on the operatic stage. Especially in Central Europe, it was not uncommon for Elsas and Isoldes to tip the scales near two hundred pounds. One often beheld ponderous, tightly-corseted Brünnhildes vying with colossal Wotans in rotundity. Most taxing to the imagination of the spectators were the scenes in which corpulent Mimis or Violettas were supposed to die of tuberculosis on beds that groaned and creaked beneath their weight.

The operatic producer's dream of a slender youthful singer with a marvelous voice, a compelling personality, dramatic ability and adequate experience has seldom been realized in any age. Difficult roles must be sung and the possessors of the requisite voices must be engaged regardless of other shortcomings. Since the World War (which undoubtedly has had a slenderizing effect on humanity in general) more than one prima donna has been obliged by contract to lose thirty or forty pounds before becoming a member of the Metropolitan Opera Company. Prevailing taste demands a slim figure.

Where Wolfsohns and Ellises turned the wheel of Fate for concert artists, the impresarios and *Intendants* of the operatic world held supreme power. Most impressive among these were the aristocratic *Intendants* of the state theatres and opera houses in pre-war Germany and Austria. The post of *Intendant* was a court appointment. The incumbent usually bore a title of nobility and as a rule he was well fitted for his duties by tempera-

ment and education. Occasionally some aristocratic ignoramus at one of the smaller courts would obtain such a position through influence, and then provide endless amusement for the musical world by his incompetence.

I remember one story that went the rounds of the opera houses in those days. As the reader probably knows, the bows of violins, violas and violoncellos are made of white horse-hairs stretched upon a flexible rod of wood. For the bows of the double-basses *black* horse-hairs are more usually employed, as they are stronger and cheaper. A newly appointed *Intendant* of irreproachable aristocratic lineage but scant musical knowledge went to the rehearsal of a new opera. Looking about for something he could criticize with a feeling of security, he apparently decided that his eyes were more dependable than his ears. He called the conductor to his side, and said in a tone of authority: "I find it disturbing that the bows of the double-basses are of a different color from those of the other stringed instruments. Have them changed at once. There must be unity in the color of the bows. They should all be white."

The conductor did not attempt to argue. Because of the needless expense involved, he hoped the *Intendant* would forget. With the obstinacy of a small mind, however, the *Intendant* remembered. After the next performance at the opera, the conductor was summoned to the *Intendant's* box.

"I am accustomed," said the *Intendant*, who had been an officer in the army, "to have my orders carried out. Why did you not have those double-bass bows changed?"

"Because, Excellency," replied the quick-witted conductor, "those unfortunate men are all in mourning!"

The conductor of opera has to meet all kinds of problems. The

members of a symphony orchestra are supposed to carry out the directions of a conductor without question, but in opera the singers claim a right to interpretative ideas of their own. The stage manager also has a right to his convictions and plans. To blend the many different elements of an opera so that artistic unity is achieved is a tremendous task. The routine conductor of lesser gifts is content to beat time, follow the singers and keep the performance from falling apart. Hence the many uninspired routine operatic performances we hear.

The Toscaninis, Bodanzkys, Furtwänglers, Bruno Walters and Reiners have the force of personality to do much more, and usually succeed in winning the artistic co-operation of the most fractious singers. The finest performances occur when the conductor, the stage manager and the singers work together in artistic harmony. This can only happen when they each have an artistic stature that commands the respect and confidence of the others.

Fees have never been very high in European opera houses, but the length of the seasonal contracts (and above all the prospect of a pension in the state opera houses) have given the singers a certain sense of security.

Vacations in most European countries have always been short. The long opera season—usually extending throughout ten months of the year—requires a large number of operas in order to avoid excessive repetition for the subscribers. Singers are therefore expected to be prepared to take numerous parts at a moment's notice. It is not uncommon for the repertory of a singer to include fifty or sixty roles.

The star system that has prevailed so long in New York could not flourish in European opera houses. Inevitably there have

always been outstanding singers in Europe, and the public is bound to have its favorites, but the general tradition is that singers may be cast for minor and major roles alike. It is not at all unusual for a soprano in Europe to sing Sieglinde at one performance and appear as one of the Rhine maidens on another occasion. In this way singers obtain a wide and rich experience, while the general level of most performances is high.

Under the American star system, before the recent reorganization of the Metropolitan Opera, the singers who undertook minor roles seldom had the chance to sing major ones unless they acted as understudies. This evil of the star system restricted both opportunity and experience for the young singer.

Just as the American concert artist was practically forced to acquire a European reputation before being admitted to the "big field" in the United States, the American singer was dependent on foreign opera houses for the experience and development that opened the doors of the Metropolitan to them. There are exceptions to all rules and a very few Americans, among whom Lawrence Tibbett stands out pre-eminently, managed to work up from small roles to stardom in New York, but the rule in opera as in the concert field was—Europe first.

Another disadvantage of the star system was that singers who had a special box-office value could dictate their own terms in more ways than one. Fabulous fees were paid in pre-war days at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. It was the golden Mecca of the operatic world. In addition to earning incomes that rivaled those of bank presidents and railroad magnates, the most successful stars of the Metropolitan Opera often demanded and obtained a monopoly on certain roles. Competition between the old and the young exists in most professions. Newcomers are



seldom welcomed with open arms by those who have spent a lifetime in winning an assured position, but in no profession of which I have any knowledge has it been quite so possible as in opera for those who have already won success actually to withhold opportunity from potential rivals. This does not sound very generous, but it is only human. The younger singer of unusual gifts is a real menace to the older singer. Survival of the fittest in opera is a matter of life and death.

Advancement in European opera houses usually depends upon ability, but occasionally one hears it whispered that the success of women singers is due to their ability to captivate some influential man rather than to their art. Stories of the engagement and advancement of prima donnas through such means are more frequently heard in France and Italy than elsewhere in Europe. There have been isolated cases in all countries which obviously pointed to the ascendancy of the eternal feminine rather than to outstanding artistic ability as the basis of a singer's contract. In the case of great artists such stories may be brushed aside. From an artistic standpoint it does not matter whether they are true or not, inasmuch as sheer merit would have sufficed for advancement. Art and the public only suffer when mediocrity is foisted upon the world by an amorous impresario, conductor or supporter of opera.

The twentieth century was not very old when some friends asked if they might bring a young singer to see me. It was during my first marriage and I was living in Berlin at the time.

No one goes through life without the pleasurable experience of coming in contact with extraordinary specimens of the human race. Beauty in the shape of man, woman, or beast makes an impression that the memory cherishes, but among all the experi-

ences of this kind which life has brought me, none is more unforgettable than my first meeting with Geraldine Farrar. She was not yet twenty. She had not yet made her operatic debut. One can scarcely imagine a happier combination of beauty, youth, charm and magnetism than hers at that time. Her talent and vivid intelligence lent uncommon radiance to her personality. She was also merry and full of high spirits. Being about the same age, we at once became friends.

When Geraldine found that I could play the piano, I was pressed into service for the study of roles. Not only did I play the orchestral portion of the opera score on the piano, but I also sang tenor parts, baritone parts, bass parts and as much of the chorus as I could. In moments of relaxation Geraldine delighted in hearing me sing her own arias, particularly those that included coloratura passages. She would then provide me with equal amusement by playing virtuoso piano pieces in which she replaced all difficult passages with airy glissandos.

After her successful debut at the Berlin Opera, we spent several merry vacations with German friends in the Bavarian Alps. We wore peasant costume, tramped about the countryside and climbed mountains. One of our favorite pastimes on rainy days was to find a piano in some simple mountain inn and make music there to the considerable astonishment of the assembled company. No questions could penetrate our incognito on those occasions. We were simply peasant-clad musicians who felt like singing operatic arias and playing Beethoven and Brahms.

Through my association with Geraldine Farrar I had my first contact with operatic life. Her career was unique in that she was cast at once for major roles at the Berlin Opera, without going through the usual apprenticeship in minor opera houses. She

very soon became internationally famous. Even she, however, could not escape the jealousies and intrigues that beset the life of an opera singer. As the years went on I learned to know almost as much about that life as I did about the concert stage.

Geraldine arrived at the Metropolitan, a few years after her Berlin debut, by way of Monte Carlo and the Paris Opera where she won sensational success. Her first appearance as Elizabeth in *Tannhäuser* at the Paris Opera provided me with my first experience backstage during a performance. It was easier to break rules in Paris than in Berlin, and Geraldine's mother smuggled me in. It was an evening of mixed emotions. Curiosity was satisfied but many illusions were shattered. It was distressing to see the pilgrims, in dusty garments and dilapidated wigs, gathered in business-like fashion around a typical Parisian in evening dress and a high hat, who stood upon a chair and conducted their famous chorus while watching the conductor in the pit through a peep-hole in the scenery and synchronizing his beat with mathematical precision. I have never been able to hear the opera of *Tannhäuser* without having the memory of that wretched little Parisian conductor ruin the spiritual quality of the pilgrim's chorus.

Another moment when I realized that the wings of an opera house during a performance are not a healthy place for the preservation of illusions was when I found myself standing beside Tannhäuser just before his romantic meeting with Elizabeth in the second act. His costume was magnificent, but a horrible mixture of grease, paint and perspiration rolled down his fat face, the expression of which clearly indicated acute discomfort. In addition to his unprepossessing appearance he distressed me by making strange and unpleasant noises for the obvious pur-

pose of clearing his throat. Beside him stood a small, anxious-looking man who peered through thick-lensed spectacles at an open score of the opera. At the right moment he literally shoved the perspiring Tannhäuser on to the stage. It was then I became aware of the importance of the coach to many opera singers, for such was the small man.

Geraldine Farrar was a good musician (she could play the scores of her operas on the piano), and as my acquaintance with opera singers at that time was limited to her, I had not realized how many vocal artists—even famous ones—were helped through their roles by coaches who did almost everything for them except the actual singing. As I learned to know more opera singers, I had various experiences which proved the curious negligence of many of these artists in the matter of achieving musical independence. One day Antonio Scotti, who was vacationing in the place I had chosen for a summer holiday, asked me to read through the piano score of a new opera for him. He wanted to decide whether or not to undertake a certain role.

When I came to the place where his part began, I asked if he would not like to sing or hum it. He replied that he could not read at sight well enough to do that. When I asked, in amazement, how he learned his roles, he said with equal surprise, "With a coach, of course!", as though it were incredible I should not have known what seemed so natural to him.

It was always a mystery to me how a great artist like Scotti could fail to master the simple fundamentals of his art sufficiently well to be musically independent! Some artists like Lilli Lehmann, Sembrich and Matzenauer were splendid musicians, but many pre-war opera singers leaned heavily on the coach.

Possibly the fact that a piano accompaniment is indispensable

for memorizing the sound of the orchestral portion of the score originally created the singer's habit of working in this way.

Standards of general musicianship for singers have been steadily rising. At the Juilliard Graduate School in New York, for instance, singers must now study musical theory and learn to play the piano, but unfortunately it has always been possible for a great voice to cover a multitude of musical sins.

The costuming of opera singers has always been a matter of great importance. In some opera houses, singers are expected to wear costumes provided by the management and designed to fit the general local production, but most famous stars like to use their own costumes.

One of the most outstanding costume designers in Europe was Muelle of Paris. She was a strange, fat woman whose ateliers in the Faubourg Poissonnière district were gloriously untidy. Geraldine Farrar once insisted upon my going to her for some concert dresses. She said Muelle would surely make me something more artistic than rue de la Paix models. Until then I had worn rue de la Paix clothes, for my mother believed strongly in dressing well for the concert stage. I was not at all lacking in woman's natural instinct for personal adornment, but in the first years of my concert career work took precedence over everything else, and my interest in clothes was secondary. The leading Parisian dressmaking establishments in those days were generous in providing gowns at a low price, or even gratis, for the theatrical stage. My mother managed to persuade them to extend the courtesy to the concert stage. When she first triumphantly announced this to me, I behaved very badly. I was in the midst of learning new music and I did not welcome any interruption.

"Of all nuisances," I grumbled, thinking of past experiences

when I was a lady of leisure, "having clothes fitted in Paris is the worst. It takes hours! You try on a sleeve, and then wait forty-five minutes for another fitter to bring a skirt."

"Not at all," my mother replied. "You have an appointment at eleven and I guarantee your fitting will be over in an hour."

I went to the rue de la Paix in a thoroughly bad humor. To my amazement, everything proceeded like clockwork. The different fitters rushed in and out as though pursued by an invisible whip, while the *vendeuse* stood by reciting a steady litany of compliments.

I could scarcely wait to get out of the shop before asking my mother what black magic she had used to bring about this miracle.

"It was very simple," my mother replied with a twinkle in her eye. "I pictured you as having such a violent artistic temperament that you might easily break every mirror in the place if you were kept waiting." And then she added mischievously, "You have no idea how useful your violent artistic temperament has been on other occasions."

A sudden light was thrown upon the universal obsequiousness of hotel employees, steamer stewards, hairdressers and others with whom I had come in contact. For a time every evidence of politeness I encountered aroused the suspicion that my resourceful parent had been at work.

Muelle was mother's Waterloo. There was no room here for anybody else's violent artistic temperament. Muelle held the center of her own stage and at first she flatly refused to have anything to do with me. A pianist meant nothing at all to her. Then somebody present aroused her interest by asserting that it was much more difficult to design something for a bare concert stage than an operatic costume which had lighting and scenery to help

out. This idea challenged the artist in Muelle, and she finally made me such enchanting gowns that, as long as they lasted, my rivals were able to attribute whatever success I had to the clothes I wore.

Muelle was never on time and the sewing of her gowns was abominable. They were forever coming apart. I went to her for a final fitting late one afternoon, the day before sailing for New York. Nothing was ready and there was a prodigious uproar in the establishment. Muelle had run the gamut of human emotions and most of the underlings were in tears before we came to the fitting of the last dress. It needed a touch of gold lace. A frantic search for gold lace produced no result; there was none. Shops were closed; I was sailing early the next day; everybody was in despair. I was just wondering which employee Muelle would murder, when the light of victory came into her eyes. "*Le pantalon de Monsieur Caruso*," she exclaimed; "*apportez-le vite. Nous sommes sauvées!*"

Gold lace was ripped off the *pantalon de Monsieur Caruso*, amidst general rejoicing, and sewn on my dress.

This gave me a taste of what it would be like if I were being fitted out with costumes for ten operatic roles!

Only those who have had a glimpse of the inner workings of an opera house have any conception of the multitude of details, the variety of activities, the endless planning, preparing, dieting, resting, coaching and rehearsing that fill the lives of operatic artists and go into the making of the performances we take as a matter of course.

The pre-war attitude of the public towards opera was more or less what it is today in Europe as in America, but the atmosphere was much more festive. The presence of royalty and colorful uni-

forms in the audience enlivened the scene in Europe, and the legendary splendor of the diamond horseshoe at the Metropolitan Opera in New York was at its height. In these days of widespread banditry in the United States, nobody would dare go about with such jewels as those that dazzled the beholders on Monday nights at the opera in pre-war New York.

The European public was faithful to its favorites and was more prodigal with applause and bravos than New York audiences. Until the recent reorganization of the Metropolitan Opera, most of the applause in New York was provided by a professional *claque*. The existence of the *claque* was often denied, but such denials were not convincing to those who attended the opera and observed its unmistakable activities.

The pre-war lover of opera in New York, however, had a special brand of loyalty towards singers that manifested itself most strongly after the objects of devotion had died or retired. I took up life in New York just after the golden period in local opera in which the De Reszkes, Nordica, Eames, Sembrich, Plançon and other stellar singers reigned supreme. I was quite willing to believe in the superlative merits of this brilliant galaxy but it was somewhat depressing to be told that nobody else could sing or ever would be able to sing.

One night I sat behind two impressive dowagers at the Metropolitan. One wore a priceless chinchilla wrap, and the other was swathed in sables. Their conversation is recorded in a letter to my grandmother from which I quote the part devoted to it:

Dearest and most modern of Grandparents,

I could not help thinking of your intense interest in modern life, thought, and achievement as I listened to a conversation be-



tween two elderly ladies at the opera last night. I will let them speak, calling them "Chinchilla" and "Sable" after the furs they wore. The opera was *Siegfried*.

CHINCHILLA: "I really don't know why I came tonight. When Alvary died, I swore I would never hear *Siegfried* again. Nobody but Alvary could sing *Siegfried*. Nobody ever will sing as he did."

SABLE: "I never heard Alvary."

CHINCHILLA: (*sharply*) "Why not?" (It was obvious she meant that Sable was quite old enough to have heard Alvary.)

SABLE: (*meekly*) "Well, you see, my family was not musical and I never went to the opera at all until I married Clarence. He liked the Monday nights. He said you could see everybody you wanted to see at the opera on Monday nights."

CHINCHILLA: "It was just the opposite with me. Robert hated the opera. The only time I could ever get him there without an awful struggle was in Munich or Bayreuth. He liked walking around the garden in the intermission and drinking beer. But in New York he went to his club while I went to the opera. I have always kept my seats but I never go to the operas in which Alvary sang."

SABLE: (*in a melancholy murmur*) "I know just how you feel. I feel the same way about De Reszke. Nobody will ever hold on to that high note as he did—you know which one I mean."

The lusty singing of the Forge Song prevented me from hearing whether these estimable ladies found the exact note Sable had in mind, but I could not help wondering how Mr. De Reszke, then in Paris, and Mr. Alvary (in Paradise), would feel about this idea of burying operas in the tomb of one's favorite tenor. Most probably they would be the first to reject such a tribute, for the real artist always places the creative art work above the interpreter—even the greatest interpreter. . . .

The conversation of Chinchilla and Sable was typical of a certain frame of mind peculiar to New York. I never found it in such pronounced form elsewhere. I suppose the time will come when some people will feel just the same about Flagstad.

The American worship of personalities in the operatic world, no matter how much it may be justified on the grounds of superlative merit, recently became a menace to the very existence of opera because it created such a box-office and fee problem. It is difficult to measure the worth of artists in dollars and cents. A superlative musical interpreter is priceless. Through the medium of his art we come close to the original inspiration of the composer whose masterpiece is thus worthily re-created for us. Judged from this point of view the fees paid to Metropolitan artists before the recent depression were not nearly high enough. But in terms of a practical budget these fees, together with constantly mounting demands of the labor unions for higher salaries of orchestra musicians, chorus, ballet and stage hands, explain why there has been so little opera in the United States outside of New York. The cost was prohibitive. There was no state subsidy for such things, and when the time came when art-loving millionaires in New York were no longer willing or able to carry the burden, it seemed as though the goose that laid the golden egg had been killed so far as opera was concerned. A new order of things that will be described in a future chapter came into being and saved the day.

It was well we were forced to go through the struggle. For all its glories and prestige the Metropolitan before the World War and for several years afterwards was a European opera house, as foreign to New York and America as the lions and tigers imported for the Zoo, and it was maintained at a cost that proves Franklin D. Roosevelt did not invent the idea of "soaking the rich."

My happiest personal recollections of the operatic world are connected with Munich, in the years just preceding the World War. Bayreuth had its own special significance and glamour. Traditions, sometimes preserved and sometimes arbitrarily created by the redoubtable Cosima Wagner, made of Bayreuth an example for Wagnerian productions everywhere, but the pre-war summer festival performances of Wagner operas at the Prinz-Regenten Theater and of Mozart operas at the Residenz-Theater in Munich took place in an atmosphere of unrivaled gayety and charm.

Musicians, painters, sculptors, writers and music-lovers from all over the world flocked to Munich in the summer. The proximity of the Alps made it possible for visitors to undertake refreshing excursions in the mountains as a contrast to the artistic pleasures of the city.

Ossip Gabrilowitsch and his charming wife Clara Clemens, daughter of Mark Twain, who rented a house near the Nymphenburg Palace, were important members of the musical colony. The drawing-rooms of such Munich summer residents served as a meeting-place for foreign visitors and Munichers.

It was pleasant to wander forth—hatless—on a bright summer afternoon to the Prinz-Regenten Theater where the performances began at four and ended before ten. The intermissions for tea and dinner provided occasion for gay social intercourse. The performances offered many an unforgettable musical impression. Great artists were in the company. Margarete Matzenauer might almost have tempted me to emulate “Chinchilla” and “Sable” in the belief that no one else could ever sing her roles. Two Americans, Sara Cahier and Maude Fay, aroused the pride of their countrymen by their art and the success they had won. Bruno

Walter did superb conducting. His Mozart performances at the Residenz-Theater were as unique as the theatre itself.

Court carriages painted bright Bavarian blue dashed about the city, and there were always some royal personages, local or foreign, walking about the garden of the Prinz-Regenten Theater during the intermissions. The Bavarian Prince Ludwig Ferdinand played violin in the orchestra.

After the performance the artists often met with friends for a *gemütlich* supper in the *Keller* of the Vierjahreszeiten Hotel.

Baron Frankenstein, the *Intendant*, was a charming and cultivated man who did much to create and maintain the high artistic standards of the institution entrusted to him. In this atmosphere the more sordid and disagreeable aspects of operatic life seemed to dwindle, and I found in the leisure of these exhilarating summer seasons the strongest impression of the essential value and significance of opera. Those who disparage it as an art form, or predict its downfall, forget that man has always had an urge towards the combination of singing and acting. Chant and gesture formed the basis of religious ritual long before opera was thought of, but they both have their roots in tendencies that are as old as humanity itself. The addition of the dance and of pageantry completes a combination of elements to which human beings have responded throughout the ages. Geniuses like Mozart, Wagner and Verdi knew this when they poured their inspiration into the art-form of opera. Their works will outlive the doubts and dogmas of its adversaries.

## 8

# MUSIC AND THE WORLD WAR

---

COMING OUT of the Bar Harbor swimming pool one summer morning in 1917, I met a lady of social prominence who seemed to be in a state of considerable agitation.

"Have you heard," she exclaimed, as she rushed towards me, "they have caught that dreadful man Muck in the act of sending wireless messages to German submarines? He has been arrested. Thank God, they have him safely on board a warship in the harbor. I have felt all along that he was a spy."

I listened in amazement, for I had been speaking with Muck an hour before in Seal Harbor.

"Are you sure he has been arrested?" I inquired. "Only an hour ago I was at Billings' Market in Seal Harbor and Muck was there buying a chicken."

The lady glared at me as though I had offered her a personal affront.

"You must be mistaken," she replied frigidly; "he was arrested last night." Her attitude was one of unmistakable resentment that her story should be doubted. Obviously she wished to believe

Muck had been arrested. Probably she also wished to believe he had done dreadful deeds. Something had to happen to justify the prevalent spy scare. It was obvious the lady was suffering from an acute attack of war fever.

Only three years before, Muck had been the idol of Boston and of many subscribers to Boston Symphony concerts in other cities. This same lady had loudly proclaimed that he was the greatest living orchestral conductor. She was what one might call a near-patroness of music. In spite of considerable wealth she stopped short of giving financial support to musical undertakings, but she liked to have famous artists at her parties. She was kind to musicians—until the war began.

Like many another member of the musical public, she was never content to admire and enjoy a musician's performance without comparing him with other musicians. She lived in a world of pigeonholes wherein each musician she heard had his place according to her idea of his merit. Good, better, best, great, greater, and greatest were degrees she took very seriously, and in listening to the performance of an artist belonging in the pigeonhole labeled "great" she never permitted herself to be carried away to the extent of forgetting that it might have been "greater." This lady had installed Muck in the pigeonhole labeled "greatest" and in the past she had stoutly defended his superiority against all comers.

The case of Muck illustrates better than any other what happened to many musicians during the World War. The cards were suddenly shuffled and many musical artists found themselves aliens and enemies in lands where a short time before they had been beloved and fêted.

Such things often made life during the World War seem like a bad dream from which I would surely some time awaken to find

myself back in Reichenhall on a certain warm summer afternoon in 1914 when the nightmare had begun.

I had been engaged for a series of joint recitals with the singer, Sara Cahier, in Reichenhall, Franzensbad, Marienbad and Karlsbad. The newspapers might have warned us of the seriousness of the political situation had we read them assiduously enough, but for several days I had been practicing very hard to make up for a long period of complete relaxation and I had not even looked at a newspaper. I had been through so many war scares in the past that I had not taken previous alarmist articles very seriously.

Neither Madame Cahier nor I was prepared for what we found in Reichenhall that fateful afternoon. When we went into a pleasant garden to have tea, our eye was caught by an ominous printed announcement.

"If, at six o'clock," it read, "six cannon shots are fired from the fortress of Hohensalzburg, it will mean that war has been declared."

We silently drank our tea in an atmosphere of growing tension. The period of waiting seemed unendurable and the faces of the people around us were white and strained. As six o'clock approached the crowd scarcely seemed to breathe.

When the fateful hour struck, six shots, muffled by distance, were heard. A band burst into the anthem, "Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles," and a wild excitement took possession of the town.

Our concert that night had been sold out for some time. To our surprise the people came. I have never played to such an emotional audience. In the quiet slow movement of Beethoven's D Minor Sonata which I played, a woman began to sob convulsively. Cahier and I could not give enough encores. Nobody

wanted to go home. In a sense the evening was—for all of us—a farewell to the old order of things, and we felt it in a vague way although the full significance of those cannon shots was mercifully hidden from us. From that day on, our cosmopolitan world of music was filled with problems, changes and tragedies.

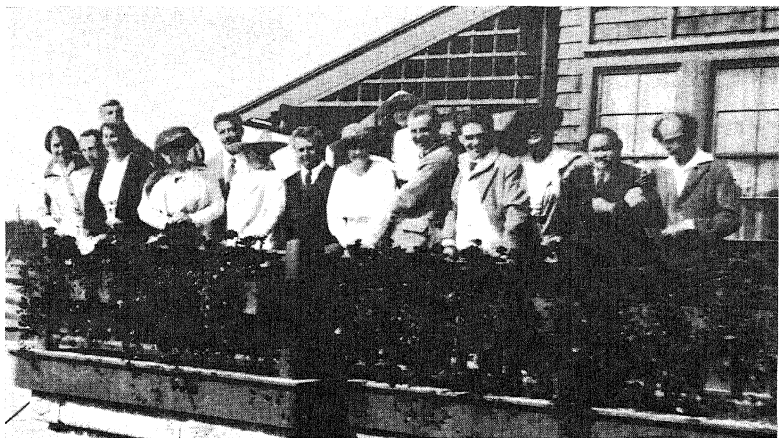
Charles Ellis furnished me with complete information on the subject of Muck's case.

Muck's father had objected to the creation of the German Empire. He was a Bavarian and disliked Prussians; therefore when Bavaria became a part of the German Empire he left his native land and became a Swiss subject. His son, then a child, automatically became a Swiss subject and always traveled with a Swiss passport. For this reason Colonel Higginson felt that Muck might be retained as conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Colonel Higginson was such a true American, and he felt so secure in the position he had won through a lifetime of irreproachable integrity, patriotism and civic benefactions, that he decided to act according to his deep conviction that art should survive war and be preserved intact throughout the progress of such a conflict.

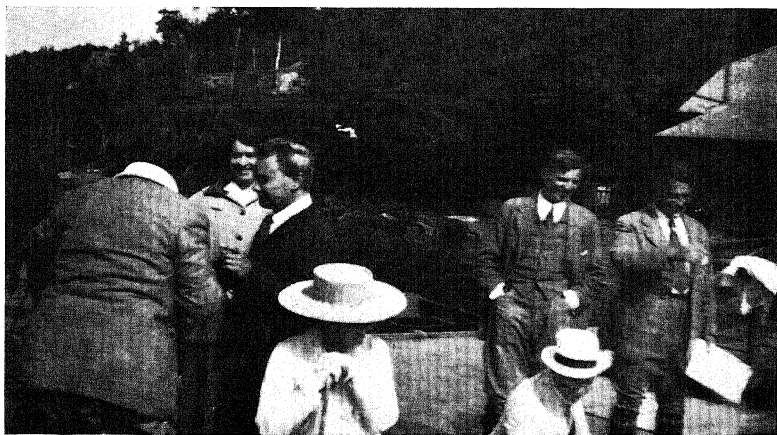
When the United States entered the World War, Muck at once offered to resign his conductorship of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In fact his one desire was to leave immediately. He had already become an object of suspicion because he had conducted the opera in Berlin and had German blood in his veins. Colonel Higginson, however, knew of no available conductor of Muck's caliber, and he said that if Muck—a Swiss subject—should leave, it would be impossible and illogical to try to hold together an orchestra in which the majority of the members were actually





*Members of the musical colony at Seal Harbor, Maine, during the World War.*

*Left to right: Olga Samaroff Stokowski, Ossip Gabrilowitsch, Reinhold von Warlich, Mrs. Carl Friedberg, Mrs. Harold Bauer, Fritz Kreisler, Mrs. Josef Hofmann, Josef Hofmann, Mrs. Ossip Gabrilowitsch (Clara Clemens), Leopold Stokowski holding Nina Gabrilowitsch, Harold Bauer, Mrs. Fritz Kreisler, Leopold Godowsky, Carl Friedberg.*



*Musicians in a jolly mood on the pier of the Seal Harbor Yacht Club in the summer of 1916.*

*Left to right: Harold Bauer turns his back and seems to be amusing Olga Samaroff Stokowski and Josef Hofmann; Mrs. Josef Hofmann (seated), Reinhold von Warlich, Ossip Gabrilowitsch and Fritz Kreisler are watching the antics of the Stokowski police dog Wolf (not visible in the picture).*



Germans or Austrians. He threatened to disband the orchestra if Muck resigned.

Muck, for all his somewhat sardonic personality, was human. He could not bring himself to cause the destruction of a great artistic institution. He knew his men would be in a desperate situation if the orchestra were disbanded. Reluctantly he agreed to remain.

He thereupon became a target for the 200 per cent fanatics who, without exposing themselves on the battle front, wage war at home, wielding with deadly skill the weapon of propaganda without which fear and hatred can never be sufficiently aroused to induce men to fight.

When it was suddenly demanded that "The Star Spangled Banner" should be performed at a Boston Symphony concert in Providence, the librarian dug out the only available score and parts in the orchestra library. It was a venerable arrangement which had been used on some remote and forgotten occasion. In it the tune was embellished with various instrumental flourishes which had been composed before Muck was born, but some fiery patriot on a Providence newspaper discovered in them a sinister intention on Muck's part to render the national anthem ridiculous.

When the Boston Symphony Orchestra played Beethoven's *Leonore Overture No. 3* in Cambridge, the famous trumpet passages backstage inspired an unmusical elderly lady who had obviously never heard the overture to say that "the clarion call of our young soldiers drilling outside so confused that traitor Muck, that he stopped the orchestra more than once and looked as though he were about to faint!"

In the summer of 1917 the Mucks had rented a cottage in Seal Harbor. Unluckily the owner, an eccentric bachelor who dabbled

in scientific research, had once installed an amateur radio station in the house. This radio outfit had long since been removed but the past history of the house accounted for the rumor that Muck was communicating with German submarines.

Muck was continually under surveillance; his mail was censored and his house periodically searched. Nothing questionable was ever found. Nobody ever seemed to reflect upon the fact that, in his exposed position, successful spy activities would have been impossible even if he had been so inclined.

I later had occasion to investigate his record in Washington after he had been interned as an "undesirable alien" and had nearly died in the heat of a Southern concentration camp. Mr. Ellis asked me to use my influence with Colonel House and others in Washington in order to obtain his release. I said I would do so provided Muck had never actually engaged in any spy activities. An investigation produced nothing to prevent my doing what Ellis had asked me to do.

Meanwhile, under pressure of war conditions, most of the players who had made the Boston Symphony Orchestra famous had to be discharged; Charles Ellis eventually withdrew from the management, and Colonel Higginson died a sadder and a wiser man.

The bloodshed and physical destruction of warfare is no worse than the mental hysteria which transforms gentle, peaceable and kindly human beings into ferocious, unjust and hatred-filled fanatics.

From 1916 until the end of the war, the island of Mt. Desert off the coast of Maine became the summer refuge of many musicians. Walter and Frank Damrosch had long been members of the summer colonies of Bar Harbor and Seal Harbor respectively.

The Kneisels had established themselves across the bay in Blue Hill and the Ernest Schellings had always had a connection with the island because of an uncle of Mrs. Schelling, the original owner of the famous Jordan's Pond. The enthusiasm of these members of the profession for the beauties of Mt. Desert gradually attracted a large colony of musicians.

In the summer of 1916, if one met a car that was being somewhat eccentrically driven along the roads of Mt. Desert Island, the chauffeur was probably Fritz Kreisler. Leopold Godowsky even managed to uproot a vigorous young tree with his car without any serious injury to himself.

If one passed a garage at Asticou strewn with parts of machinery, it probably meant that Josef Hofmann, mechanical enthusiast that he is, was having a particularly enjoyable morning. He then lived, with his first wife, at Asticou, near Northeast Harbor. One day, when I invited them both to lunch, Mrs. Hofmann replied that they would like to come, but Josef had taken all their cars and boats apart and there was nothing left in which they could transport themselves to Seal Harbor.

Seal Harbor has a single village street. The post office, the general store, Billings' Market and Miss Whitmore's establishment (where you can obtain village gossip by the yard) are landmarks in an environment of rural charm. The John D. Rockefeller, Jr., the Edsel Fords, and other landowners have seen to it that Seal Harbor did not develop into a regular watering-place with large hotels and branches of New York shops.

This rural atmosphere appealed to musicians, and most of them rented cottages in Seal Harbor. It was rumored that fifty grand pianos arrived at the Seal Harbor dock each summer during the war. Ossip Gabrilowitsch alone had three; two for him-

self and one for his wife. Godowsky brought numerous piano pupils who rented rooms in the village. Out of every house on the one and only street came the sound of pianos or harps, for Carlos Salzedo was also in Seal Harbor with a flock of harp pupils.

If one encountered a particularly industrious berry-picker by the roadside, it was sure to be Mrs. Harold Bauer, wife of the famous pianist. She made unbelievable quantities of jam during the summer from berries she picked herself.

The grand musical parties of the summer season were usually given by the Walter Damrosches or the Ernest Schellings in Bar Harbor. I remember one evening at the Schellings' when the guests included among others the Walter Damrosches, the Frank Damrosches, the Gabrilowitsches, the Harold Bauers, the Kreislers, the Bodanzkys, the Godowskys, the Josef Hofmanns, Hans Kindler, Matzenauer, the Carlos Salzedos, the Franklin Robinsons, the Harold Randolphins, the Carl Friedbergs, the singer Marcia van Dresser, and the dancer Nijinsky, who was visiting friends.

It was that night that some of us had our first impression of Nijinsky's approaching madness. We had been discussing his various dances and finally Gabrilowitsch said, "There is only one thing I do not understand. When you dance Schumann's *Carnaval* you do not use the program the score provides. Why not?"

Nijinsky, his eyes flashing, replied: "There is an artist who understands music better than any musician, painting better than any painter, sculpture better than any sculptor, and drama better than any actor: it is the Russian dancer—it is Nijinsky."

With that he walked away leaving us speechless from the effect of such an exhibition of megalomania by a man we had formerly known as a most sensitive and modest artist.

The Seal Harbor musical colony was more addicted to picnics,

mountain climbs and an occasional impromptu fancy dress party at which we wore improvised home-made costumes than to formal affairs.

The temperament of the artist is inclined to extremes of melancholy and gaiety. In order to relieve the tension of a profound war depression which we all felt very deeply, we resorted to gay frolics which were sometimes so amusing that for a few hours we forgot the woes of the world. Nothing like the costumes invented on those occasions has ever been seen. The most successful one I concocted for myself was a Brünnhilde costume fashioned almost entirely of kitchen utensils. I sewed small metal rings, with which pots are scraped, all over the front of a sweater. This provided a respectable corselet of armor. I punctured a pudding mold and stuck in two enormous feathers whereupon it became a warlike helmet. I took a wash-boiler lid for a shield, a broom to which a carving knife had been strapped for a spear, and I hung an evening cape from my shoulders. Conversation during the evening was punctuated by my lusty *Ho-jo-to-hos*.

Charades were popular among us. On one occasion I remember being a penitent in a confessional. Harold Bauer was the father confessor. I began to recite a list of sins of which the most hardened criminal might be proud. Harold Bauer from time to time unctuously murmured, "Proceed, my child." My list of sins grew longer and longer as I racked my brains for further interesting misdemeanors. I was just about to confess that my imagination had given out when somebody guessed the word.

For this party Hans Kindler had borrowed a wig which provided a magnificent top-knot; somebody's fur rug was wrapped about his person; he cut himself a stout sapling for a staff and finally appeared as a most impressive Rheingold giant.

After we had wearied of nonsense, we decided to have some serious music. Kindler's room was above the general store in the very heart of the village, where the population gathered on a pleasant evening.

Kindler, anticipating the fun of giving the villagers a shock, went to get his cello without making any attempt to cover up his peculiar attire. To his amazement, nobody paid the slightest attention to it. Not even when he stood in the doorway in the full glare of a brilliant shaft of light, holding his giant's staff in one hand and his cello in the other, did anybody betray the slightest surprise, curiosity or interest. Kindler was crestfallen and indignant. "What is the matter with these people?" he grumbled. "One would think they are in the habit of meeting Rheingold giants every day." It was then that somebody remembered a film Annette Kellerman was making at the time, in which savages, vikings and mermaids played a great part. Her troupe had been swarming over the island in strange costumes. Obviously Kindler had been taken for one of them.

There were professional concerts given by members of the summer colony at the charming, classic Building of Arts that is set like a jewel among the hills and woods on the outskirts of Bar Harbor. Most of these concerts were for the benefit of some local charity.

Sometimes we had wonderful impromptu music of a serious nature in private. I shall never forget Matzenauer's singing of Schubert's *Erlkönig* with Harold Bauer at the piano.

Stimulating discussions of artistic problems were frequent. I still use the fingering of a certain passage in Brahms' F Minor Sonata given by Godowsky on one occasion when Gabrilowitsch, Hofmann, Friedberg, Bauer and I gathered around a piano and



discussed technicalities at such length that our respective despairing husbands and wives had no choice but to go off and seek some other way of amusing themselves for the rest of the evening.

Needless to say, every musician on the island was preparing for concert tours during the ensuing season. One unforgettable experience was the way in which four of us worked out a Bach concerto during the summer of 1918. Harold Bauer, Ossip Gabrilowitsch and I had been engaged to play Bach's C Major Three-Piano Concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra in Philadelphia, New York, and other cities during the following winter season. Taking advantage of our unusual opportunity for leisurely rehearsal we assembled four pianos (the fourth serving for the orchestra score played by Leopold Stokowski) in the large hall of the Gabrilowitsch summer home in Seal Harbor and proceeded to work out every detail of the concerto. The result made me wish artists could more frequently strive for a perfect ensemble in this manner instead of playing a concerto through once at an orchestra rehearsal according to the prevailing custom. Routine experience and the inspiration of the moment combine to achieve more or less satisfactory results at concerts despite the traditional single rehearsal of the soloist with the orchestra, but our preparation of the Bach Triple Concerto was something very different, and we not only played it on tour with the Philadelphia Orchestra during the season 1918-19, but were engaged to repeat it in Detroit on October 24, 1919, on the occasion of the dedication of the new Orchestra Hall in Detroit, built for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

The choice of repertory forms a never ending problem to the artist. To choose the music that arouses one's unbounded enthusiasm and yet lies as far as possible within the bounds of

one's temperamental and technical possibilities is no easy matter. Often enthusiasm will carry an artist beyond the bounds of normal possibility. For instance, in the 1920 season I undertook to play all the thirty-two sonatas of Beethoven in a series of eight concerts in Philadelphia and New York. I was always an omnivorous worker and the very magnitude of the task was inspiring to me. I loved this music and the complete absorption in it necessitated by the proposed concert series was a wonderful experience, but it would have broken my health had I been less strong than I was. I also enjoyed learning modern music, and my search for a new concerto once brought me an amusing letter from Richard Strauss. I had been told that he had written a new piano concerto and as I was preparing for a concert season in which I happened to have a great many engagements with symphony orchestras, I wrote and asked Strauss if I might have the rights of performance for his new work for piano and orchestra. His answer to my letter began with the astonishing sentence, "For once you will regret that you have two healthy arms!" He then informed me that his new concerto was written for the left hand alone and the rights of performance were held by the one-armed pianist for whom it had been composed!

My personal taste covered a wide range, and I was never limited to any particular style of music although I had my special enthusiasms. My favorite concerto for piano and orchestra was the Brahms B flat. Sometimes it is said the piano is a dying instrument because twentieth-century composers are neglecting it. How this idea could be entertained by anyone who knows the rich and inspired literature of the instrument seems inconceivable. So long as the piano music of the great classic and romantic masters exists, and no other suitable instrument for its perform-

ance is devised, the piano will remain an indispensable part of musical life.

One of the most precious features of the war summers at Seal Harbor was the opportunity for close friendship with congenial musicians. We not only shared pleasant hours of relaxation and stimulating musical experiences, but were drawn close by our interest in world affairs and their effect on our profession. We all knew that whatever the outcome of the war might be, profound changes were taking place in our world of music.

Among the various lifelong friendships that were cemented during those summers, none was more delightful and deeply valued than the one it was my privilege to have with Clara and Ossip Gabrilowitsch.

Clara Clemens Gabrilowitsch was unlike anybody else. If she took part in a discussion of philosophy, world politics or literature one realized that Mark Twain had produced a daughter with a remarkable mind. Spiritual, gifted and usually absorbed in the loftier things of life, Clara was frequently absent-minded and utterly disconnected from everyday affairs. If she got into difficulties at such times, the nearest man, woman or child invariably rushed to her rescue, and took an amount of trouble that could only be explained by the potent spell of her charm. Perfect strangers loaned her money when she forgot to take her purse with her, which often happened.

Gabrilowitsch, who adored her, affected to be stern on such occasions, but afterwards related her delicious vagaries with a happy chuckle and evident relish. Clara's one ambition, however, was to appear practical and efficient in the eyes of her lord and master. "Don't tell Ossip" was her plea as I joined her in an apparently hopeless search for a valuable ring on a Bavarian

mountainside. This was my first experience in trying to help Clara out of one of her predicaments. The search seemed utterly hopeless. It had rained since the ring was lost and Clara was not a bit sure of the path she had taken, but she found the ring. She always did find things, although the question "Has anybody seen a little bag?" recurred like the refrain of a perpetual song if one saw much of the Gabrilowitsch family.

Once she received a letter stating that she had overdrawn her bank account. Absorbed at the time in the study of Schubert songs, Clara paused just long enough to pen a very polite reply in which she offered a handsome apology and enclosed a check on the overdrawn account.

Cooks—and good ones, too—dropped from Heaven into Clara's lap. It was very difficult to find anyone for domestic service in Seal Harbor during the summer. If servants had to be replaced at that time, ordinary mortals were obliged to import them from Boston or New York.

One summer the Gabrilowitsches' cook suddenly became ill and was taken to the Bar Harbor Hospital. Friends immediately prepared to stand by and see to it that Clara, Ossip and their daughter Nina were properly nourished. When I called up the following day and invited them for dinner Clara said absent-mindedly, "For various reasons, I should prefer to have you dine here." "Have you forgotten," I inquired sternly, "that you have no cook?"

"But, I have got a cook!" remonstrated Clara. She could never quite explain how the excellent cook had been acquired. The only answer Clara would give to questions on the subject was "The cook just came," and what is more, Clara, being ob-

viously protected by a special dispensation of Providence, took the cook's mysterious advent as a matter of course.

In a serious emergency when she chose to put her mind on practical things, Clara could be a tower of strength, and the list of her benefactions to suffering humanity would require an extra volume.

In their desire to help others, the Gabrilowitsches were in complete accord. A hard-luck story never failed to touch their hearts and open their purses. Many a millionaire would shrink from philanthropies they undertook without hesitation, and their friends were often worried lest they be duped and waste themselves and their money on unworthy cases.

I welcomed their decision in the winter of 1917-18 to take a house in the country near Philadelphia, not only because it would give me the pleasure of their company (I was living in St. Martins near Philadelphia at that time) but because the demands of New York life were evidently overtaking their strength. Chief among their own reasons for moving to the country was the question of noise.

Most musicians are sensitive to noise but the Gabrilowitsches were abnormally so. I was asked to find a suitable house and the request was accompanied by a list of noise-producing agencies which were "not to be within a mile of the house." The list included: pianos, babies, railroad trains, chickens, trolley cars, barking dogs, automobile thoroughfares, cows, victrolas.

It produced a sensation in the real estate office where I applied for help in the undertaking. We finally found a lonely house on the top of a bleak hill. Nothing would have induced me to live in it for five minutes, but the Gabrilowitsches were en-

chanted with its apparent guarantee of a noiselessness that would only be broken by the sounds they made themselves.

A house-warming was prepared, and if ever a house needed such a proceeding, that one did.

On the morning after the Gabrilowitsches had been duly installed in their cheerless abode, I telephoned and hopefully inquired how they had slept. Instead of the ecstatic rhapsody on noiselessness which I had expected, Gabrilowitsch's voice replied in accents of angry despair: "I was up at five o'clock shooting crows."

Towards the end of the war Clara conceived the idea of using her father's house at Ridgefield, Connecticut, as a convalescent home for soldiers. Eventually the plan had to be abandoned, but while she was working on it she wrote letters to various rich men among her friends, asking if they would be interested in joining her in such a venture. One of these letters was addressed to Andrew Carnegie. I had just written to Clara describing my painful efforts to play various concerts in spite of a very heavy cold. Clara's answer to this and her letter to Andrew Carnegie happened to be lying together on her desk awaiting her signature on one of her absent-minded days. Luckily she asked Ossip to read the letter to Andrew Carnegie before sending it. Across the top, Ossip found the following lines which Clara had intended to add to her letter to me: "P. S. I wish I were near enough to kiss your dear little noddle and put your cold to bed where it belongs!"

We often wondered what Andrew Carnegie's sentiments might have been had the letter been sent off without Ossip's reading it!

Notable in the lives of our artist friends of the Seal Harbor

musical colony was the way in which European musicians began to take root in America.

Musicians who had hitherto lived abroad, visiting the United States only for the duration of the concert season and returning to Europe as soon as they were free to do so, began to speak of permanent residence in the United States.

Many took out papers for American citizenship. This particular change was to have a far-reaching influence on musical life in the United States.

About 1917 the question of composers and compositions became acute. The works of living composers belonging to enemy countries were naturally banned. But that did not satisfy war fanatics.

Organized propaganda was made for the performance of more music by composers of the allied countries. The great works of French, Italian, Belgian, and English musical literature had always been performed in the United States, but under war conditions the mediocre composers of these countries threatened to crowd Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms off the concert programs. Some subscribers to Philadelphia Orchestra concerts ostentatiously arose and walked out whenever Wagner's music was performed. Finally the committees of leading symphony orchestras were greatly disturbed by an intensive propaganda which had as its object the abolition of *all* German and Austrian music.

Despite the fact that London audiences were capable of calmly enjoying a performance of *Tristan und Isolde* during an air raid, some violent elements in the United States felt that listening to a symphony of Mozart was unpatriotic and a menace to the success of the war. Perhaps it was a menace, for it

would be difficult to hate anybody or anything while listening to Mozart's music, and hate is the indispensable nourishment of war.

When the question of banishing all German and Austrian music from symphony programs became acute, Clara Gabrilowitsch and I decided to undertake a little diplomatic mission of our own. I had known Colonel House all my life. President Wilson was visiting the Houses at Manchester, near Boston. Clara and I went there and laid the matter of the concert programs before the President and Colonel House. We returned armed with the official verdict that it was not necessary to extend current warfare to composers long since dead, nor to deprive our audiences of the musical masterpieces that belong to the world rather than to any single country. That settled the matter, at least for two orchestras, and luckily common sense prevailed throughout the musical world.

Another far-reaching change brought about by the World War involved the musical education of Americans. When the war broke out, the American music student was forced to find ways and means to study in the United States. The habits and customs of the past collapsed before his eyes.

This aspect of the influence of the World War upon the lives of musicians will be discussed at length in another chapter, but the causes which led to subsequent developments were clearly apparent during the years of the great conflict. The unhindered internationalism so essential to art had received a blow from which it has not yet recovered.



## 9

# THE "PEACE CONFERENCE OF AMSTERDAM"

Holland Honors Mahler and Mengelberg

---

THE FORMAL engraved invitations to the Amsterdam Mahler Festival in 1920 were imposing. The programs of the concerts which festival guests were invited to attend strongly suggested inevitable musical indigestion. The whole thing had an official tinge that led experienced and wary musicians to suspect a possible overdose of social entertainment which, however pleasant in itself, might prove to be taxing in addition to the extensive musical program. Nevertheless, when Mrs. James Lanier urged me to accept the invitation and to join her in making the journey, I decided to go.

The Mahler Festival was a celebration of Willem Mengelberg's twenty-fifth anniversary as orchestral conductor in Holland. In the course of that quarter of a century he had won the gratitude of the entire country and occupied a secure place as the leading figure in its musical life.

It was rumored that the first plan to celebrate his twenty-

fifth anniversary was the proposed gift of a hundred thousand gulden to be raised by popular subscription. When Mengelberg was sounded out with regard to this possibility, he promptly said that he would much rather organize a Mahler festival on a grand scale and perform all the important works of the Viennese master in a series of concerts to which musicians from all over the world would be invited.

If this rumor is true—and the source from which I learned it seems reliable—no orchestral conductor ever gave a more striking proof of devotion to the music of a composer in whom he believed.

Throughout his career as conductor, Mengelberg had been the steadfast champion of the music of two contemporary composers—Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler. He performed their works when they were still the objects of hot controversy or derision. He continued to repeat these works until they had a large public following in Holland. His decision to organize a Mahler festival was the logical climax of an important part of his life's work.

Mahler was dead. His fame as a composer was growing, but he still needed champions. Richard Strauss had already won his niche in the hall of fame, but many still denied such a place to Mahler. This was partly the result of enmities he had incurred in life, but the memory of his extraordinary personality was fresh in the minds of those who had known and revered him as a man.

The years during which Mahler was conductor of the New York Philharmonic do not form a very creditable page in the musical history of the city. Doubtless he was irascible and diffi-

cult, but he was a great man, and New York never gave him his due.

He had not been long in America when the Charles Steinways invited me to meet him and his wife at dinner. I was so excited over the prospect that I arrived a full half-hour too soon. Mrs. Steinway greeted me with the words:

"I am seating you beside Mahler at table tonight, but do not expect him to speak. He cannot be made to talk at dinner parties."

Mr. Steinway gallantly murmured something to the effect that "Olga ought to be able to draw him out," but Mrs. Steinway was not disposed to flattery. She reaffirmed her conviction that Mahler would remain silent, and she added mischievously, "If my husband is right and you *do* make him talk, I will give you five dollars."

I responded to the challenge, but when Mahler arrived my courage sank. There was something so remote about him at first glance that I could scarcely imagine his taking part in any ordinary conversation. When we sat down to dinner he never even glanced at me. Oysters on the half-shell received his undivided attention. He did not seem quite so much interested in the soup, however, so during that course I ventured a timid introductory remark. Without looking up he said "*Ja*," and then relapsed into silence.

I racked my brains for a provocative subject of conversation, but nothing I could find in the animal, vegetable or mineral kingdom elicited any response. Mrs. Steinway began to look distinctly triumphant.

Finally, I remembered that before dinner, when Mahler ap-

peared to be utterly oblivious of everybody present, he had taken *The Brothers Karamazoff* off the bookshelf and turned over the pages as though searching for a special passage. I decided that the Dostoyevsky masterpiece was this drowning woman's last straw. But I also knew that if I did not succeed in establishing a controversial basis of conversation, I would merely get another "Ja." So I boldly asked him if he did not consider *The Brothers Karamazoff* a much-overrated book.

"Not at all," said Mahler fiercely, putting down his knife and fork. "You ask that because you do not understand it." He thereupon launched into a long discourse on the subject of Russian psychology and Dostoyevsky's supreme understanding of it, while I settled down to the enjoyment of my dinner (and my triumph!), only throwing in an occasional provocative question when Mahler paused to eat a mouthful.

The signals exchanged between me and the Steinways must have mystified anybody who saw them. Mr. Steinway kept looking at his watch and lifting his glass to me. He teased his wife unmercifully when Mahler followed me out into the drawing-room and spent the rest of the evening looking for passages in *The Brothers Karamazoff* with which to illustrate his points and complete my conversion. I have often wondered what would have happened if he had known we were discussing one of my favorite books.

Before I left, my crestfallen hostess presented me with six crisp new dollar bills. She felt that five would not be enough in view of the length of the conversation!

Playing a concerto with the Philharmonic under Mahler's direction was a privilege I repeatedly enjoyed. The first time I was soloist in one of his concerts on tour was in New Haven. By

that time he and I had become good friends, and I had conceived a great liking for his lovely wife who was one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. She was not with him on this particular occasion and he felt the need of company at supper after the concert. I had lured my dear friend Miss Dehon to accompany me to New Haven. It sometimes amused her to "go on the road" when I played in cities near New York. When Mahler asked us both for supper she pleaded fatigue and went back to the hotel. Probably she had visions of shop talk in German, for Mahler spoke very little English, so she deserted me.

Being in a university town, Mahler expected to find gay cafés filled with students in multicolored caps. When we had searched in vain for something more enticing than a corner drug store, and our hotel had refused to serve what we wanted at such a late hour, his dismay was pathetic.

"*Was für eine Stadt!*", he murmured bitterly. "What kind of students do they have here? No wine, no songs, and not yet midnight!"

It did not seem to comfort him at all when I assured him that Yale students did sing at other times and had pretty much what they wanted to drink on occasions. . . .

He only shook his head. The night-life of New Haven was evidently a great disillusionment to him, and he remained pessimistic about the *joie de vivre* of the American university student.

The only thing I could suggest was to take refuge in the hotel sitting-room I shared with Miss Dehon. I knew she usually kept something in the way of nourishment on hand in case we should be hungry before going to bed. We found her still up

and, thanks to her, we feasted on milk and crackers as we talked far into the wee small hours. Mahler's taciturnity was reserved for strangers and social functions. When he was at his ease with friends he was a brilliant conversationalist with a somewhat mordant wit.

It later proved to be fortunate that Miss Dehon and Mahler made friends that night in New Haven over the milk and crackers. When his health began to fail before his final departure from America he lay in bed for weeks at the Netherlands Hotel, weary from his struggles with people and conditions he could not understand, and hurt by the hostility of the New York press. As his strength waned and he sensed that the end might not be far distant, he strove desperately to finish his last symphony, sitting up in bed with his manuscript before him and looking like the ghost of his former self.

He always disliked American hotel food and during these trying weeks it was almost impossible to induce him to take any nourishment. His wife, beside herself with anxiety, told me about this and I repeated it to Miss Dehon who had inquired about his condition. After that Miss Dehon constantly sent him soup and dainty dishes prepared by her own splendid Swedish cook. I frequently acted as messenger and brought him these things. They helped to sustain him until he left for Europe, where death overtook him.

It is perhaps as well that he did not live to witness the horror of war. Mahler was an idealist and he would have suffered mentally and emotionally more than most men. But I feel convinced that he would have rejoiced to know that the first big festival of his works would also be the first international meeting of musicians after the war. It was a Parisian journalist who bap-

tized the Mahler Festival "The Peace Conference of Amsterdam."

A letter to my father describes the festival better than I could from memory.

Dearest Father,

The first day of the festival has made me glad I came. In one sense I was glad before today, because Harriet Lanier has proved to be a most delightful traveling companion. Some of my New York friends thought I was crazy to share a cabin with her on the boat. She has the reputation of being a fire-eater, and I will admit that Harriet loves a good fight more than most people. But she is really an enchanting person. She looks like a French marquise, exquisite, delicate and always marvelously dressed. Her pugnacity invariably strikes me as comical because it is so foreign to everything about her. Imagine a Tanagra figurine shaking its fist and you can understand what I mean. Perhaps I cannot take her pugnacity seriously and that is the reason why we get on so well. Her house in New York is a gathering place for musicians and artists of all kinds. When one crosses the threshold, one is in France. Everything in the house—except her valuable collection of Chinoiserie—is French, even to the monograms on her lovely bed-linen which I particularly enjoy when I stop with her. When I visit her I usually take my breakfast on a tray beside her own bed, for nothing amuses me more than to watch her open her mail. Then it is that Harriet, looking like a piece of Dresden china with the lace frills of a boudoir cap shaking as she gets excited, waxes pugnacious if somebody in a letter or a concert review dares to criticize anything about her "Friends of Music" or Bodanzky.

She has really done a wonderful piece of work in creating the Friends of Music. It is modeled on the historic Friends of Music in Vienna, and Bodanzky makes wonderful programs that enable us to hear music nobody else in New York attempts to perform. He and Harriet pay not the slightest attention to popular taste.

They continue to perform caviar programs—unfamiliar music, rarely heard compositions, anything in which they take an artistic interest. Their subscription concerts have won a high place in New York musical life and their audiences are the best—in quality if not in numbers—in the city.

Of course, there is a deficit. Harriet either raises the money or pays it herself. She is wonderfully generous.

The only thing she cannot endure is criticism of the people and things she believes in. She would make a marvelous dictator. She would abolish free speech at once, I am sure, and free thought if she could.

If anybody dares to suggest that Bodanzky is not the greatest living conductor, war is declared at once. After some adverse reviews in the newspapers she tried to keep the New York critics out of the concerts of the Friends of Music, but somebody managed to pour oil on the troubled waters—luckily for Bodanzky.

She seems to have arrived at some sort of inner compromise by which she will permit herself to enjoy Mengelberg's conducting during the Mahler Festival without feeling it is disloyal to Bodanzky. But, really, it is such fun being with her on this trip, and she has been so considerate and charming that I spend my life writing postcards to the people who predicted we would not be on speaking terms by the end of the ocean voyage.

We found great bunches of tulips, sent by the festival committee and Mengelberg, in our hotel rooms. Bottenheim immediately came to inquire whether he could do anything for us. Bottenheim is Mengelberg's personal manager and his devotion to his conductor is quite as passionate as Harriet's adherence to Bodanzky. Every time Harriet and Bottenheim are together, I tremble lest they drift into an argument about the relative merits of their respective idols. It would surely end in bloodshed. Fortunately they will both be too busy and too preoccupied during the Mahler Festival for such an encounter.

Bottenheim is in his element these days. He beams and radiates enthusiasm as more and more distinguished guests arrive and



give him more and more trouble. He is indefatigable in looking after people, and seems to enjoy working over a mass of details that would reduce any ordinary mortal to a state of despair.

I asked Mengelberg for permission to attend his morning rehearsals with the orchestra. I wanted to hear the relatively unfamiliar Mahler works more than once. He sent me a card that would serve as a general "open sesame," and I got myself up very early yesterday morning. Flat boats loaded with flowers floated on the canals and I enjoyed the walk to the Koncertgebouw-Hall. The Koncertgebouw Orchestra has suffered less from the war than others, and is probably the best in Europe today.

Mengelberg arrived at rehearsal in the same kind of brown velveteen jacket he wore in the green room after conducting Philharmonic concerts in New York. I got out the orchestral score with which I had fortified myself and was all prepared for study and enjoyment when, alack, Mengelberg began to harangue the orchestra in Dutch. He talked and talked. It was a veritable torrent of Dutch. I, of course, understood nothing. Mengelberg had rehearsed the orchestra so much before the festival that he now only needed to remind the players of certain things. I heard very little music during the morning—just a few stray passages that needed polishing. In future I am going to sleep late!

Mengelberg has the reputation of talking more at rehearsal than most conductors, and he sometimes says very droll things. One of his orchestra men told me the following story:

During a rehearsal of the *Liebestod* from *Tristan*, he rapped sharply on his desk and exclaimed, "Gentlemen, gentlemen, wake up! We are performing the music of *Tristan und Isolde* and you are playing like married men!"

When we reached the hall for the opening concert of the festival last night, it seemed as though all the flowers I had seen on the canal barges in the morning had been massed on the stage. There was a perfect riot of color and the floral decorations created a most appropriate atmosphere of festivity.

The Prince Consort was there to represent Queen Wilhelmina,

and he and his suite provided another colorful note with their uniforms and orders. Every few minutes some internationally famous musician would enter the hall. The composer Arnold Schönberg arrived, followed by a group of pale young men. We were told they were his pupils. So might a philosopher in ancient Greece have wandered about with his disciples.

Casella, the modern Italian composer, sat near us, and Schnabel and his wife were across the aisle. I cannot begin to list all the musicians who are here, but it was quite dramatic when Florent Schmitt, the Parisian composer (who in spite of his German-sounding name is very French), and Abendroth, the German conductor from Cologne, met in Mengelberg's dressing-room and shook hands for the first time since 1914.

If all the performances are as good as those in the first concert, the festival will be a rare musical experience.

In retrospect certain musical impressions of the Mahler Festival stand forth very clearly in my memory, the most vivid being *Das Lied von der Erde*, with Cahier's wonderful singing of the contralto part; the *Kindertotenlieder*; the Second Symphony and, above all, the Eighth Symphony. The performance of the latter reminded us vividly of the first American performances of the work under Stokowski's direction in Philadelphia in 1915. When we hurriedly left Munich at the outbreak of the World War in 1914, taking with us no personal belongings beyond what we could carry in knapsacks, Stokowski carried the huge score of Mahler's Eighth Symphony under his arm all the way to Philadelphia. He encountered great difficulties in producing the work because a considerable sum had to be raised to underwrite the performances. Once more the Boks came to the rescue. The enlarged orchestra, the huge chorus, children's chorus and soloists were very costly. Stokowski would only undertake it

if he could have sufficient rehearsals. The organization of this "Symphony of a Thousand," calling upon the largest instrumental and vocal forces employed in any symphony, the building of a stand to accommodate nearly eight hundred singers, and endless incidental details involved an enormous amount of work besides the expense.

Such musical enterprises are easier in Europe than in America because people are more docile and disciplined. In Philadelphia the chorus members taken from every walk of life seemed to have a veritable army of relations who stormed the stage door and tried to get into the hall during rehearsals. The doorman—who was generally known as "the Czar"—eventually became so fierce that it was all the musicians themselves could do to get in.

We had eleven sold-out performances in Philadelphia. Trainloads of New Yorkers came over to hear the symphony, and I spent weeks organizing what was needed for their comfort and entertainment. An additional performance at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York was given under the auspices of the Friends of Music. Harriet Lanier and I reminisced for hours after hearing the Eighth Symphony in Amsterdam, and agreed that nothing could ever obliterate the impression made upon us by the first performance in Philadelphia. The opening phrase, "Veni Creator Spiritus," which we then heard for the first time had literally left us breathless. It was a memorable experience. In Amsterdam I had the kind of enjoyment which comes from being familiar with every note of the score.

It was very clever of Mengelberg to organize morning concerts of modern chamber music during the festival, on days between the big Mahler concerts. They provided variety and contrast. Some of the musicians who were guests of the festival

thereby took an active part in the proceedings, and the composers of the different European countries had their first chance—since the war—to come together in an intimate way and compare notes, so to speak.

Mengelberg asked me to play the Piano and Violin Sonata of Richard Strauss with the violinist Alexander Schmueller. Although the extreme modernists even then rejected Strauss's music as antiquated, Mengelberg was determined to have a Strauss work on the programs. In these chamber music concerts, and in the conversations and discussions that went on during the Mahler Festival, one was made aware that the World War formed a great divide between musical life as we knew it before 1914 and the new post-war period. Barriers were down musically as well as morally. Freedom from rules was just as dear to the musical composer of 1920 as freedom from convention was to young radicals of the period, who snatched recklessly at the joy of life in a sort of revolt against the suffering into which the world had been plunged by the war.

The only thing that aroused my indignation in Amsterdam was the tendency of some of the so-called "modern" composers to try to pull the great masters of the past off their pedestals. Neither the piling up of simultaneous semitones nor the Schönbergian building of chords on fourths worried me in the least, but when I heard conversations in which the speakers scoffed at Beethoven, Brahms and Wagner, my ire was aroused. Today one inevitably begins to compare modern achievements with those of the giants of the past, sometimes belittled by "modernists" of the post-war experimental era, and the result is not exactly favorable to the scoffers—at least that is the way most musicians feel in 1939. Undoubtedly we have been through a

transitional period and we are still too close to it to form lasting convictions that have any value. It will probably have its importance in musical history, but we can point to very few modern masterpieces of any real significance.

One rabid "modernist" was standing beside me in Amsterdam just before I went on the stage to play the Strauss Piano and Violin Sonata. He asked me how I had liked the preceding number. It had been an atonal piece of unrelieved cacophony and I was forced to admit that I had not greatly enjoyed it. He then said very sarcastically: "Never mind, you will now have a great success in E flat!" It was evident that he considered a composition in a fixed tonality as beneath contempt. These experiences interested me because I have always had a lively artistic curiosity and much more receptivity for the new than most musicians of my generation. I am also optimistic about the future. The day is near when we shall have become accustomed to the strange new harmonic idiom of the twentieth century. The period of experimentation is nearing its close and soon composers will begin to express themselves without attaching undue importance to mere innovation.

During the entire Amsterdam festival I had a strong feeling that Mahler closed a great period. For this reason the festival was truly significant, quite apart from Mengelberg's jubilee, and as the first important international musical event after the war it also deserved to be called, at least in a musical sense, "The Peace Conference of Amsterdam."

# 10

## POST-WAR MUSICAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

---

WHEN IT became certain in 1923 that unclouded domesticity was not to be my lot in life, I decided to take up my winter residence in New York and spend my summers in Seal Harbor, Maine, in the house which royalties on the Victor records, made with my large concert grand, had enabled me to acquire.

Since 1913 I had gradually drifted back into playing in concerts. This was partly due to a certain demand for my services and partly due to Arthur Judson who had become manager of the Philadelphia Orchestra. It was he who first lured me to appear occasionally with the orchestra, and gradually extended my concert activities as his own managerial projects expanded. Even though I thus reversed the decision of retiring permanently from the concert stage, I regarded my own career as a secondary matter and always subordinated it to the duties and demands of private life throughout the years from 1913 to 1923.

When I finally bought my little place in Seal Harbor it had

the importance of being my only permanent home, and I threw myself with vigorous interest into the task of making it as attractive as possible. In doing this I was in my element. For some reason—perhaps worthy German *hausfrau*s in my ancestry or perhaps the discomfort of a vagabond existence on concert tours—I always enjoyed working over a house. Housekeeping never bored me.

The estate I had bought consisted of a cottage perched on the side of a hill and a bungalow situated below it. The cottage was filled with shabby, nondescript furniture. My concert grand lived in the bungalow, most of which formed a large studio with a raftered ceiling.

Beside the studio the bungalow had a tiny kitchenette which I fitted up for serving tea or picnic suppers, and one bedroom and bath which, for lack of space in the upper cottage, represented the only available guest quarters of my establishment. The bedroom of the bungalow was so small, however, that no ingenuity in the placing of furniture could make it serve for two people. Visions of all the married couples I should like to have as guests haunted me. The enlargement and other alterations of the upper cottage had almost exhausted available funds and I simply could not afford to add a room to the bungalow. I should not have minded sleeping on a couch in the studio myself, but I did not like to ask guests to do so.

Finally, with sublime disregard of exterior architecture, I built what one of my friends irreverently called "a wart on the bungalow." It was simply a shed with a window for light and air. It cost much less than a room and presented no roof problems. It provided just enough space for a comfortable bed, a night table and a lamp. Large doors opening into the studio enabled

the occupant to enjoy space and air without feeling that he was a sort of secret disgrace that had to be cleared away before the room could be normal. I screened the exterior of "the wart" with shrubs and trees, and although architects shuddered when they saw it, no one else was disturbed. Many a famous musician slept there and slept well, for the bed was worthy of a better place.

A charming friend of mine from Virginia, who made her living as a decorator, had a special gift for painting furniture, and I was fortunate enough to secure her services. I was determined to have gay surroundings for myself and my small daughter Sonya who was not yet two years of age. The cottage and the bungalow were therefore painted inside and outside. The upper cottage had been a particularly drab and dreary affair, but painted white with green blinds and colorful flower boxes it became most cheerful and inviting.

Agnes Blackwell, my decorator friend, came to live with us for several weeks, and literally painted everything in sight. For instance, I turned her loose in the dining-room with a lemon and a blue-green shawl as samples for color scheme. She made something so enchanting of the room and its furnishings that several people unblushingly copied it. My cook insisted she should have a night watchman for her pots and pans. She feared every morning when she went down to the kitchen that she would find Miss Blackwell had painted them every color of the rainbow. They were about the only things in the house that escaped the omnivorous paint-brushes.

In the midst of the transformation my mother wrote and urged me to have the house blessed by a priest. In her mind the new house was symbolic of a new life.

During the Catholic ceremony on such occasions the inhabi-



tants of the house follow the priest with lighted tapers from room to room while he besprinkles each one with holy water and recites appropriate prayers. I happened to have an Irish Catholic household, all but the baby's nurse who was English and a Protestant. Even she, however, grabbed a candle when the procession formed, and followed us with the baby.

As Agnes Blackwell was a Protestant I never thought of speaking to her about the proceedings. I had really forgotten all about her for the moment. When our procession arrived in the drawing-room, Agnes was seated upon the floor in front of the fireplace, with her back to the door, painting a wastepaper basket. Before she was aware of our presence, she was startled by a sudden shower of holy water.

When she looked up and beheld the good father in his sacred vestments followed by the entire household bearing lighted tapers, the expression of astonishment upon her face was so comical that I had to beat a hasty retreat to stifle unseemly laughter in the hall.

One afternoon not long afterwards, I was playing with the baby on the lawn. Nobody but a crazy musician would have had that lawn. My estate, one acre in extent, was on the side of a steep hill. There was not an inch of level ground on the entire place except a circle for cars at the front door. The walk from the house to the studio was a veritable mountain climb, and my driveway was so narrow and so steep that when I asked Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who was at that time busily engaged in road-building on his own near-by estate, whether or not I should attempt to improve it, he said I had better leave it alone because it was "so dangerous that everybody would be forced to drive carefully."

All along I was obsessed by the idea that a child should be able to play on grass. After lengthy conferences with Mr. George Smith of Otter Creek, who was an expert in building the "pockets" in which flowers are planted in many a hilly garden on Mt. Desert Island, it was decided that the slope of a great bare rock should be transformed into a flower garden and a lawn. He built two stone walls, thereby creating two terraces filled with earth.

On the lower terrace flowers were planted and the upper one was turfed so as to form a grass plot about twenty by thirty feet in size. Some cynical friends called it my golf course. A stout railing was constructed to prevent the baby from falling off the lawn into the delphiniums, and she and the puppy romped about in this glorified pen with such ecstasy that I felt amply repaid for having insisted upon creating it in spite of all natural obstacles and the good-natured derision of my friends.

We were in the midst of the daily delight of watching the puppy try to bite the stream of water from the gardener's hose when a visitor's card was brought to me. The name—Dr. Eugene Noble—was familiar. I knew that Dr. Noble had been made secretary of the new Juilliard Foundation but I had never met him and I could not imagine why he should be calling upon me on a warm summer afternoon in Seal Harbor.

Preliminary greetings and my apologies for the somewhat disheveled state in which the baby and the puppy had left my hair and attire were barely concluded when Dr. Noble informed me of the object of his visit. He had come to ask if I would consider a contract to teach piano at the new Juilliard Graduate School of Music.

I literally gasped with astonishment and then exclaimed, "But

I have never taught, Dr. Noble. I am utterly inexperienced. Why did you ever think of choosing me as a teacher?"

"We know you have never taught," he replied calmly, "but we know you have yourself done what we want you to teach. The Graduate School will not be like the usual conservatory of music. We want an artist faculty composed of musicians who can impart what they have learned from actual experience on the concert or operatic stage to students who are sufficiently well prepared to profit by what the artist teachers have to give. The kind of teaching that might require the experience you lack, will have been done beforehand in the case of the students who will come to you. What we believe you can impart to them from the richness of your own musical background is something many an experienced teacher might not have to give. In any case we want to sign a year's contract if you are willing."

I knew that if I hesitated I would never have the courage to sign that contract, so I took the plunge at once. Before Dr. Noble left the house everything was settled.

I have often had occasion to wonder since then why more people do not have their houses blessed. Certainly the new life that began that day in my Seal Harbor cottage has had a blessing on it, for no professional activity has given me more joy than my work at the Juilliard Graduate School of Music.

My heart was beating faster than usual when for the first time I entered the building that then housed the school. It was a six-story apartment house on East Fifty-Second Street, built by one of the Vanderbilts. Nothing could be more unlike an ordinary New York apartment house than this building. The rooms were large and had very high ceilings like the typical old-fashioned New York mansion. This was, of course, splendid for

music. Some of the rooms had odd, irregular shapes. Long mirrors and the character of the lighting fixtures testified to former grandeur of furnishings. Magnificent bathrooms adjoined the studios that had once been bedrooms. The general atmosphere was delightful.

Entrance examinations had previously been held by a jury composed mainly of New York music critics. The students to whom they had awarded fellowships were assigned to the different teachers, and I had ten in my class. Each one received a weekly private lesson that was supposed to last an hour, but I never watched the clock. Mr. Cary, the elderly lift man, frequently had to warn me that the building was about to be closed.

From the beginning I loved teaching. Probably the sheer ardor with which I approached it established a relation with my pupils that stimulated them to do their best, but it is doubtful whether I could have satisfied these keen and gifted youngsters if I had not had the experience of Stokowski's orchestral rehearsals. It was he who, unknowingly, had taught me how to teach.

Music is a subtle and intangible thing. Its highest values lie beyond the possibility of cold analysis, and can scarcely be translated into words: they must be felt. At the same time there are certain musical fundamentals that must be consciously grasped. Certain artistic things happen under the influence of inspiration, and the artist who is a real master must be able to recognize the workings of cause and effect that underlie them.

This is especially true of the orchestral conductor. He does not himself produce the sound that is music. His interpretation of a score must be made clear to a large number of musicians,

and this cannot be achieved through gesture alone. Spiritual quality, mood and emotional intensity can be conveyed at the moment of performance by a magnetic conductor with a sufficiently powerful personality, but a purely musical and technical preparation must precede the hour of inspiration. At rehearsal the conductor deals with the laws of musical cause and effect. His time is limited. He must make his verbal suggestions and corrections terse and to the point. He must know the reasons for what he demands. The orchestral player soon loses respect for a conductor who does not know his *métier*.

Stokowski has developed a wonderful rehearsal technique. I witnessed this development from its earliest stages throughout eleven years. That is probably one reason why I am still signing contracts with the Juilliard Foundation.

In the advanced teaching of music, a constant discussion of musical fundamentals gradually builds up art-consciousness in the student. I made several rules for myself when I began to teach. One was, never to correct a detail without mentioning the fundamental issue underlying the mistake. No one can teach or learn emotion. Understanding of music is the only thing that can be given by one person to another, but a deep artistic understanding is the secure foundation upon which the real artist builds his dream castles fashioned of evanescent tone, imagination and emotion.

Even when these dream-born tonal structures soar to spheres of other-worldly spirituality, they must rest upon a foundation governed by the laws of musical cause and effect.

In working out the details of interpretation and technical mastery with my students I was inspired as I had been in my own work at the piano by two things: Stokowski's orchestral re-

hearsals, and a lesson I once received from a curious source, namely, the French actor Coquelin. Miss Dehon was one of his close friends and to her I owed the privilege of knowing him shortly before his death.

Just before my musical debut with the Colonne Orchestra in Paris (in 1908), Coquelin was playing to crowded houses in a revival of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. I was so fascinated by his acting of the part that I saw the play many times. While Coquelin's acting always seemed to be spontaneous, I noticed that it varied very little from performance to performance even in minute details.

One night at a supper party I asked him how he could possibly manage to be in the mood for *Cyrano* night after night.

"Your question proves your youth, my child," he replied with paternal indulgence; "no real artist can afford to depend entirely upon the mood of the moment. We cannot turn on inspiration with an electric button. A real interpretation of a role in a play contains the inspiration of many moments. Art means the possibility of seizing inspiration and holding it through a realization of what we do under its influence. We cannot, perhaps, achieve complete realization because inspiration is too mysterious a force, but it gives us insight and that is something we can preserve. The more we have penetrated to the depths of an art work the less we will be inclined to change our interpretation of it. If our interpretation rests upon the insight vouchsafed by inspirational flashes and deep understanding combined with sufficient technical mastery to carry it out, and if we approach re-creative art in this way, we shall always have something worthy to offer the public no matter what our momentary mood

may be. I am sure these principles can be applied to music as well as to the theatre."

I have found this the soundest basis upon which to work myself and to teach. It insures a living re-creation of the work in hand without in the least interfering with emotional freedom, for if an inspirational impulse is strong enough to be worth anything it can always be followed, and the mastery one has previously acquired only makes it easier to do what the impulse demands.

In teaching music I soon found the reason why there are so few great artists among musicians. In the last analysis, being an artist in music is not only a question of what the musician can *do* but what he *is*. Realizing that, I almost immediately began to occupy myself with the human development of my music students, and the way they reacted to my efforts in this direction had almost more influence upon my opinion of their ultimate possibilities than what they accomplished at the piano.

The world is full of "slick" pianists. By that I mean the pianist who can play a great many notes at once, achieve great speed, read well at sight and memorize a great many pieces. This is all praiseworthy and requires a great deal of hard work, but unfortunately one can do all these things without being an artist. Obviously, it is also possible to be a brilliant, cultivated and generally outstanding human being without being an artist. It is the right combination of "being" and "doing" that produces the real artist.

Another rule I made for myself was not to play for my pupils. Only too often advanced music students learn through imitation. Every child is born an imitator; that is the way the child

learns to talk. But there comes a time when the language that has been learned through imitation must serve to express the independent thought of the individual. There imitation must stop unless the individual is a nonentity. Unhappily, because of too much imitation, it sometimes happens that a music student emerges from under the shadow of a great artist-teacher, only a miniature copy of his master. He has been coached in the performance of a certain repertory according to the interpretative ideas of the teacher, and when he is finally left to himself he cannot stand alone. It is easy to argue that a very great talent would not submit to such domination, but even a potentially strong forest tree is stunted if surrounding shade prevents it from getting the sun and space necessary to its own growth.

The only imitation that ever occurred in my teaching was when I showed a student some musical offense he had committed. I acquired a sufficient command of musical mimicry to cause the student to inquire with horror, "How could I have done that?" There is nothing like hearing ourselves as others hear us for the elimination of bad habits!

My colleagues in the piano department of the Juilliard Graduate School were Ernest Hutcheson, Alexander Siloti, Josef and Rosina Lhevinne, Carl Friedberg and James Friskin.

The musical world contains its share of jealousies, intrigues and various other manifestations of imperfect human nature. I had seen enough of such things in other musical fields to be quite prepared to find them in a school like the Juilliard, where the high level of talent among the students is bound to create keen competition. To my amazement, year after year has gone by without the slightest friction or disturbance among the members of this remarkable group of artist-teachers. It is said there



are climates in which bad weather is conspicuous by its absence. The piano department of the Juilliard Graduate School has such a climate. If there have been storms, I knew nothing about them. The affection I have for my colleagues is only equaled by my gratitude that it was my privilege to work side by side with them and my confidence that they will never occasion any disillusionment.

One reason for this is that with all the existing differences of age, race and temperament, there are certain qualities common to the group that bind these artists together. Idealism, sincerity and generosity are the first that come to my mind when I think of my Juilliard colleagues. Then they are kind people, and the real ability of each arouses the respect and musical confidence of the others. Finally, I have found in this group a sense of justice that has enabled us to sit around the examination table twice a year for twelve years without a single deadlock or disagreeable experience, in spite of many differences of opinion and heated arguments that often kept us for hours after our examination affairs for the day should have been concluded.

During the World War, the old American idea that the advanced study of music must necessarily take place in Europe died a natural death, for the simple reason that it became impossible. By the time conditions in Europe had been restored to the point that facilitated travel, the finest educational opportunities for the young musician beckoned at home. Formerly the American violinist would have been obliged to cross the Atlantic to study with Leopold Auer. When Auer became a member of the Juilliard Graduate School faculty, the student who was talented enough and sufficiently well prepared could win a fellowship and study free of cost with him in New York. Singers could study in the

Juilliard Graduate School under ideal conditions with Marcella Sembrich, cellists with Felix Salmond and composers with Rubin Goldmark.

It is a curious coincidence that two great endowed schools with similar aims and methods should have arisen about the same time. The will of Augustus Juilliard provided about fifteen million dollars for the musical foundation that bears his name and supports the Juilliard School of Music in New York.

In 1924, Mary Louise Curtis Bok, daughter of the famous publisher Cyrus Curtis and wife of Edward Bok, founded the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

It was at first directed by Johan Grolle, who had headed the excellent Settlement Music School Mrs. Bok had previously founded in memory of her mother. Mr. Grolle was succeeded by William Walter. Finally, when the famous pianist Josef Hofmann became director in 1927, Mrs. Bok endowed the school with twelve and a half million dollars. Outstanding among the distinguished teachers who have taught at the Curtis Institute are Josef Hofmann, Marcella Sembrich, Emilio de Gogorza, Elizabeth Schumann, Carl Flesch, Efrem Zimbalist, Lea Luboshutz, Felix Salmond, Louis Bailly, Carlos Salzedo and Fritz Reiner. Samuel Chotzinoff is extending the activities to the realm of musical criticism.

Recently, Josef Hofmann resigned as director because of his desire to devote more time to creative work in music, and Mrs. Bok herself directs the institution that owes its existence to her princely generosity.

There have been certain differences in the plan of organization of the two institutions. The Curtis Institute accepts music students from all countries while the advantages of the Juilliard

Graduate School, in obedience to the will of Augustus Juilliard, are reserved for American citizens. Again, Mrs. Bok, personally active in the development of what she has created, has gone much further in the direction of giving financial assistance and support to the students of the Curtis Institute during their years of study than the Juilliard Foundation, which undertakes various projects of national scope outside of actual educational work and is therefore unable to do more than award free fellowships and reserve a Student Aid Fund for emergencies or illness. Both schools have afforded marvelous opportunity for the musical development of outstanding talents.

The artist-teachers who formed the faculties of the Juilliard Graduate School and the Curtis Institute at the time they were founded were no longer musical nomads who arrived in America two days before their first professional engagement and left as soon as possible after the last. They took root in the United States, thus furnishing proof that art flourishes where there is peace and prosperity. They became part of a new and vigorous musical development in the New World, still fed by the traditions and the composers of Europe but at least rooted in the native soil so far as education and performance were concerned.

The value of travel, of exchange of ideas, of sufficiently long residence in foreign countries to learn their languages and mode of life can never change, but in achieving a certain musical independence the United States took a great step forward. The Juilliard Graduate School and the Curtis Institute did for musical education what Johns Hopkins did for medicine. Not that they are the only fine musical schools in the United States but that, owing to the way they are organized and the presence of numerous artists of a certain type on their faculties, they represent

more than others, in the minds of music students throughout the country, a liberation from the necessity of exile during the most important years of musical education.

Students of outstanding talent have naturally flocked to these endowed schools and competed for fellowships in the autumn entrance examinations. This was hard on the private teacher and much bitter feeling was engendered. For several years teachers who would have thought nothing of sending their pupils abroad to study with some European master, resented having them go to a teacher of the same type in a New York or Philadelphia School. Criticism of the endowed schools was a favorite pastime in certain quarters of the musical profession. It was natural.

I remember asking one irate critic of the Juilliard, whose chief grudge was the existence of the school, what the cultural destiny of the United States would have been if we had failed to found any universities but had insisted upon sending all Americans who desired further education after finishing high school to Oxford or Cambridge. That was, to a certain extent at least, analogous to the musical situation before the war. Gradually the criticism of the Juilliard and the Curtis grew less. Their service to music is now widely recognized.

The human element looms large at the Juilliard examinations. There the personalities of the faculty members and of the applicants for admission are alike revealed. Youngsters from every corner of the United States have come before the examining board. Somehow I always picture families debating whether or not to send Mary or John to the Juilliard just as my family had once discussed my going to Europe. And when we have been forced to reject some applicant I have had unhappy visions of a mother anxiously awaiting a telegram.

Applicants must comply with certain conditions. The advantages of the Juilliard are reserved for American-born or naturalized students; they must be within the age limit (in the piano department they cannot be less than sixteen nor more than twenty-five years of age although the limit was originally thirty); they must have had a high-school education or its accredited equivalent; they must furnish an outline of their former studies and a list of their teachers and they must produce the consent and recommendation of their last teacher. In this way the Juilliard authorities have hoped to eradicate any impression that the school desired to take pupils away from other teachers. Such an idea was absurd in any case because there were always so many more applicants than available fellowships. The Juilliard has had no problem in getting students.

The applicant for a piano fellowship in the Juilliard Graduate School must pass theoretical examinations and have his ear tested. Finally he plays for the piano faculty, adhering to a program that prescribes the type of composition we wish to hear, but not specific pieces.

I have never lost interest in these examinations. The extraordinary manifestation of personality and the study we can make of the influence of racial background and of musical standards in different parts of the United States have always fascinated me. In recent years we have begun to have applicants who are pupils of our own graduates. Many of our former students have returned to their respective home towns to create a new and higher standard of music.

This reminds me of something my grandmother said to me just before her death. She was eighty-nine, but in full possession of her fine mind, and she said: "I am glad you have had all I

should have liked to have—playing in concerts and living in the midst of artistic things, but as I look back upon my music-teaching in Texas, I am content, for I made something grow where there was nothing.” And I responded with full sincerity that I believed her achievements were much more important than any musical activity in a crowded metropolis. I have often quoted her remarks to my students, for most of them wish to remain in New York. If they all did, it would create an increasing congestion that could only be disastrous, except in very rare cases.

At the Juilliard examinations each member of the faculty has a paper to fill out, giving his impression of various qualities shown by the applicant, as well as additional remarks. It is here and in our subsequent discussions that the personalities of the faculty members are revealed.

Alexander Siloti, the much-beloved senior member of the piano faculty, represents for all of us the handing on of a great tradition. When we have lunch together during the noon recess we love to hear him speak of his master, Liszt, and tell stories of his own student days. At examinations he attaches more importance than the rest of us to the age of the contestant. The applicant for a fellowship cannot be young enough to please Siloti. He is radiant when some youngster of sixteen presents himself. Siloti's relations with the English language are somewhat strained. He always speaks Russian with the Lhevinnes and German with the rest of us, but he hates to write in any language. His notes—always in German—are therefore very laconic. When the contestant is impossible Siloti almost invariably writes down one phrase which means that the applicant is musically hopeless. It consists of two words only:

"SOLL HEIRATEN"  
(*should marry*)

We have often suggested that Siloti should open a matrimonial agency for rejected Juilliard applicants.

Ernest Hutcheson, dean of the school and now president of the Juilliard School of Music, has such a keen analytical mind and such a fine command of language that his notes give a clear picture of the applicant. Years afterwards, if we wish to look up a student's record in the files, Hutcheson's notes, written in a small fine handwriting, usually give us all the information we desire. One also finds in them an indication of the splendid human and artistic qualities that have made his brilliant career what it is.

If I forget the opus number of some composition (and this frequently happens as I have a bad memory for such things) I have only to ask Carl Friedberg or James Friskin. They both have had a vast teaching experience and they not only provide forgotten opus numbers but they know to the last sharp, flat, or thirty-second note rest, the differences that occur in various editions of the same composition. They are walking encyclopedias of the piano literature.

Josef Lhevinne does not write copious notes but he can "smell a talent," as Siloti says, and seldom makes a mistake in this power of recognition no matter how undeveloped the applicant's technical or musical equipment may be.

Rosina Lhevinne and I often join in an offensive and defensive alliance against the men of the faculty when some human question is involved. This is more apt to occur in the spring examinations. The Juilliard Graduate School awards fellowships

for only one school year—October first to the middle of May. At the close of the season another examination is held to decide whether or not fellowships shall be renewed. The normal renewal of fellowship for a talented student whose work has been satisfactory embraces three years. The student is then graduated. Being dropped before the end of the third year usually means that the talent has proved to be less than we believed it to be, or that the student's work was below par. These are the occasions when Rosina Lhevinne and I (the only women on the piano faculty) sometimes plead for another chance for some talented scamp who has not worked as well as he should, or for some youngster who has had a battle with ill health or difficult life conditions. The men may grumble about feminine soft-heartedness but they usually give in.

The most outstanding students in the school can have anything the school has to give as long as they need or desire it. Such students are put "on advice," which means that they may return to their teacher at any time for criticism of a new concerto, for help in program-building or a discussion of professional problems. Our experience is at their service. This is one of the most important and highly valued features of the Juilliard Graduate School, and our students seldom fail to make use of it.

When John Erskine became president of the Juilliard Foundation, plans for a new building were completed and the school took on a much more institutional character. The Institute of Musical Art, a school of proven worth and high standing, admirably developed by Frank Damrosch, was taken over by the Juilliard Foundation. The new Graduate School was erected as an adjoining building on Claremont Avenue, overlooking the Hudson.



A delightful theatre, fully equipped for operatic performances, was a most important addition to the facilities of the school. Stage experience has been a crying need for operatic students in America, and the Juilliard now provides it.

I have often taken foreign guests to operatic performances and symphony concerts in this theatre where every performer (including members of the orchestra) is a student. It is a pleasure to witness the surprise and enthusiasm of foreign visitors whose fathers probably considered the United States a land of barbarians so far as art is concerned.

The head of the opera department is an American—Albert Stoessel—and his skill and resourcefulness in building it up are typical of a new order of things in the United States.

Together, the Institute and the Graduate School afford every conceivable kind of musical educational opportunity. Americans of outstanding talent who win fellowships in the Graduate School have at their disposal, in addition to their major subject, all the theoretical branches, literature classes, languages, ensemble playing for instrumentalists, operatic experience for singers, orchestra experience for conductors or orchestra players, in short everything a professional musician could possibly need. There is a fine library of books and musical scores as well as records and phonographs.

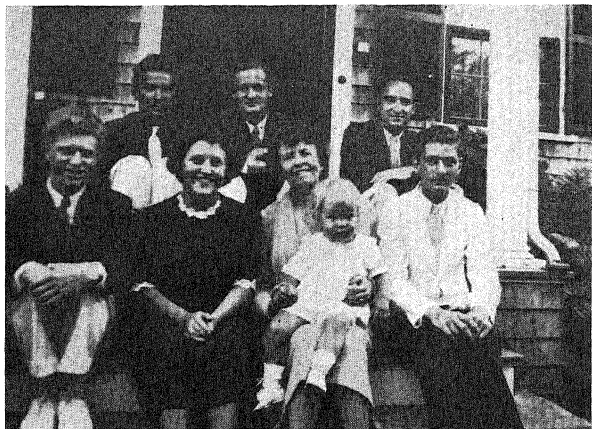
A cafeteria on the ground floor is run at a loss and provides wholesome nourishing food at prices the student can usually afford to pay. When even these nominal prices are a hardship, books of luncheon coupons are given gratis. Practice rooms with Steinway pianos are at the disposal of the student. The student has to earn it all, however, through the quality and scope of his

work. The highest standards are rigorously maintained. If the student's work falls below them, the gifts of the Foundation are withdrawn: his fellowship is not renewed.

General living expenses are not defrayed by the Foundation. Often the students work their way through in all sorts of strange ways. One of my pupils, Hanna Klein, was the pianist of the Major Bowes Family at the Capitol Theatre during all the period of her study with me at the Juilliard. Perhaps some of my readers may remember the way in which Major Bowes invariably said "Thank you, Hanna," after she played in the broadcast. I knew nothing of her radio activities when she first entered my class. At her first lesson, after I had given her an assignment of compositions to be learned, she said timidly, "Madam, do you think you could give me some three-minute pieces?"

This was my first initiation into the problems of the musician who takes part in a series of radio broadcasts. For three years Hanna and I wrestled with the demon of "radio-time." No longer can Father Time be represented as a benevolent old man with a beard. "Radio-time" is a ruthless devil with a whip. He lashes the broadcasters into chopping up music into required lengths just as kindling is cut. Nobody will ever know how Hanna and I worked over finding pieces that were worth playing and lasted exactly three minutes without being mutilated.

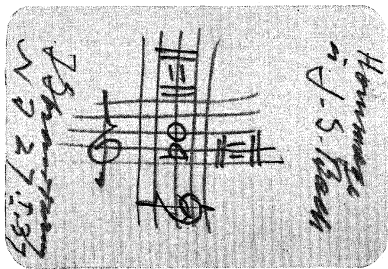
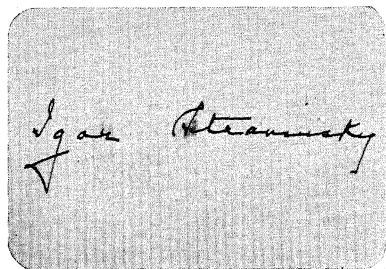
One day she came to me and said she must also have *one-minute* pieces with which to fill up a possible break in the broadcast. If somebody, waxing temperamental, played or sang a bit too fast, or miscalculated the time when rehearsing, Hanna filled up the crack with a piano solo. We almost lost our minds over those one-minute pieces, but it meant bread and butter to Hanna. She was very talented and a splendid worker and later



The author with a group of her piano students holding fellowships in the Juilliard Graduate School, and her small nephew and godson at her summer cottage in Seal Harbor, Maine.

Left to right: Top row—Wendel Diebel (Des Moines, Iowa), Francis Madeira (Philadelphia), Henry Harris (Pittsburgh). Bottom row—Eugene List (California), Leah Effebach (Washington, D. C.), the author and George Hickenlooper, Jr. (who is acquiring a piano technique in playing with one finger), Joseph Battista (Philadelphia).

Eugene List and Joseph Battista have each won the Philadelphia Youth Award giving them a debut appearance as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra.



Igor Stravinsky teaches a novel bit of musical lore at a dinner party where he sat beside the author by scribbling a musical pleasantry on his place-card. Turning always to the right, and using German notation terms:

Note in center is "B" (German for B flat in treble [G] clef)

" " " "A" in tenor clef

" " " "C" in alto clef

" " " "H" (German for B natural in treble [G] clef)

Thus by means of different clefs the single note spells the name "Bach."



made a successful debut with another pupil of mine, Pauline Gilbert, in a two-piano concert at the Town Hall in New York. The pair now play in the Magic Key and other important radio broadcasts, and it is a particular satisfaction to me to hear Hanna play more than three minutes over the air.

One autumn when I returned from Seal Harbor, Rosalyn Tureck, one of my most gifted pupils, called me and told me she was playing at Radio City Music Hall during the current week and earning seventy-five dollars. She did not stop to explain what she was playing, but Sonya (my daughter) and I were so curious that we lost no time in going to the Music Hall. There we found on the program an act entitled "Twelve Grand." From the caverns beneath the stage arose a sort of gigantic turn-table, around the edge of which twelve grand pianos were placed, leaving a circle in the center bare. Twelve pianists in elaborate costumes and white wigs, men alternating with women, were playing a most intricate piece of jazz to the accompaniment of Mr. Erno Rapée's orchestra. It was not easy to find Rosalyn under her wig and heavy make-up, especially as the turn-table was constantly revolving, but we finally succeeded.

Then Sonya exclaimed excitedly, "Mummy, there is Judith, and Horace, and Jackie . . ."

We finally became aware that several members of my musical family besides Rosalyn were participating in the performance, as well as other Juilliard youngsters. When the Rockettes proceeded to occupy the center of the turn-table and execute one of their precision dances, our cup of wonder was full. The performance was repeated several times during the day and evening. The pianists thoroughly earned their fees. This is an example of how enterprising music students find means of subsistence in

our fantastic metropolis. Each of those youngsters on the stage of the Music Hall could have played a Beethoven concerto in a symphony concert, and the scene arose before my mind two years later when Rosalyn Tureck made her very successful debut at Carnegie Hall, playing the Brahms B Flat Concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Carnegie Hall holds many memories for me, and one of them comes to mind when I think of my students. I was giving a joint concert with Schumann-Heink on a hot June evening for a large convention of the music industries. I told Schumann-Heink, in the course of a heart-to-heart talk during the intermission, that I did not envy her the possession of her great voice, but that I always envied anybody who had many children. I had wished for twelve children all my life. Schumann-Heink's reply was,

"You vas born a musician; I vas born a musician. If you did not play de piano and I did not sing ve would do something else in music. Ve might play de bass drum in de orchestra. Some vay ve would make music, because de feeling ve have has to come out. If you vish for twelve children, you have mutter-love for twelve children. De feeling has to come out. You can't use it all up on vone poor child. You drown her mit mutter-love. Use it up on other children. Plenty people have twelve children and not mutter-love for vone. You find plenty."

I often thought of this homely piece of philosophy, as destiny provided me with so many musical children that I sometimes felt like the old woman in the shoe. But Schumann-Heink was right. "Dat feeling has to come out."

When my pupils had perfectly good parents of their own within reach, I never interfered, but when some stray youngster

came from far away and obviously needed maternal attention, he got it. Then I had a wonderful time worrying over tonsils and teeth, posture and clothes, diet and exercise, going to bed early, language and table manners.

One of the pupils who got perhaps more than his share of such attention was Eugene List, because he came to me when he was so young. His story is worth relating as an example of new conditions after the World War in musical education and in beginning a musical career in the United States. My readers who go to concerts may also be interested because they will be sure to hear him, as he is now playing all over the country.

Eugene came with his mother from Los Angeles (by bus) when he was thirteen. His father, a professor of romance languages in a California school, was unable to accompany them. The boy and his mother were looking about for a fellowship in some endowed school. He was too young to enter the Juilliard and he had arrived too late for examinations at the Curtis Institute, but he had been told by Oscar Wagner, then assistant dean of the Juilliard Graduate School, that he might study with me if he could win a fellowship in my class at the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music. Entrance examinations were about to take place. Oscar Wagner usually finds a way out of every problem for anybody who is lucky enough to consult him. Our beloved dean, besides being a fine musician, is the kind of person who quietly and serenely eliminates every kind of trouble, from a flaw in the heating plant to the life problems of the budding genius. The Juilliard School could not exist without him.

The Philadelphia Conservatory of Music, which is often confused with the Curtis Institute, is the oldest chartered music school in the Quaker City. When I first lived in Philadelphia,

one of the finest musicians in the orchestra was the cellist, Hendrik Ezerman. I soon found that he played the piano even better than the cello. He was one of those wonderfully educated European musicians who have always formed the backbone of musical life in the Old World. He had come to America as an orchestra player because it was a practical way to establish himself in a new country, but he soon branched out, bought the Philadelphia Conservatory and proceeded to make it one of the best music schools in the East. This school has never had an endowment. On sheer merit it has weathered the storms of war and depression. In the past season—1937-38—it had its most prosperous year.

When Hendrik Ezerman died in 1929 as a result of an automobile accident, his widow became director of the school and she asked me to take over his advanced piano class for the remainder of the year. I consented, believing it to be a temporary arrangement, but after ten years I am still teaching there with the greatest interest and pleasure because I believe the school is so valuable to Philadelphia. The Curtis Institute, like the Juilliard Graduate School, takes magnificent care of the student of potential professional caliber who is talented enough and sufficiently far advanced to win a fellowship. But the citizen of Philadelphia whose child has neither pronounced talent nor the willingness to devote more than a modest amount of time to music cannot hope that the child will be accepted at the Curtis Institute. The amateur must find some school where he can pay for musical education on a different basis. The Philadelphia Conservatory admirably meets this need of the city, and the standards and atmosphere of the school stimulate the students to go much



further than the average American music student without professional aspirations.

These were the first reasons why I became so interested in my work in this school. My class, however, soon included students of outstanding talent and professional caliber who studied with me on a scholarship basis. Friends of Hendrik Ezerman created a fund for a yearly scholarship bearing his name. Another was created in my name.

One of my chief interests in teaching has always been the development of outstanding teachers. I also found splendid material for this type of work at the Philadelphia Conservatory. So many teachers are disappointed virtuosos who would like to do nothing but play in concerts, and only teach because they must. It seems to me the ideal teacher is one who likes to teach and also plays in concerts because he wants to, but not in the degree that gives it first place in his life. Such teachers have a greater value than one more virtuoso, excepting always the very few interpreters who have the gift of supreme inspiration.

At the head of the list of fine young teachers who have graduated from my classes at the Philadelphia Conservatory are Wilhelmina Ezerman, daughter of Hendrik Ezerman, and her husband, Allison Drake. Intensely musical and admirably prepared by Hendrik Ezerman, these fine young musicians, who give splendid two-piano concerts, are admirably fitted to direct the future activities of the Philadelphia Conservatory in a continued service to the city. Between them they now teach over a hundred pupils. As I call the pupils of my pupils "grand-pupils," such numbers render the increase in my musical family quite staggering.

Mrs. Ezerman, one of the most delightful of women, has unusual executive ability. She also has such a strong sense of humor and keen wit that she has done much to create the happy atmosphere of the school. I can only spend one day a week in Philadelphia and it is a busy one. Lessons begin one minute after I arrive and continue until I barely have time to catch my train for New York, but Mrs. Ezerman and I usually lunch together at the Acorn Club, and she makes this period of relaxation so amusing, despite the fact that we always have serious Conservatory business to discuss, that I often find myself chuckling all the way back to New York over some of her droll remarks and her talent for seeing the funny side of things. We have never had a serious disagreement and I do not believe we ever shall.

When Eugene List played at the entrance examinations of the Philadelphia Conservatory his talent was quite audible to the naked ear and he won the Hendrik Ezerman scholarship. His mother—a chemist by profession—told me he had already played with the Los Angeles Orchestra and been acclaimed a *Wunderkind*. She wondered if he might find some engagements to play in the East in order to help with living expenses.

I discouraged this because I have a horror of the exploitation of musical children in public concerts. Even when it seems most successful, I cannot help feeling that they must be in some way stunted as human beings, for, knowing professional life, I cannot imagine how a normal development for a child could occur in the midst of it. I became even more opposed to public appearances for Eugene when I found in teaching him that his playing rested on a combination of blind instinct and intensive coaching, and that he had to learn a great deal before he could be a real musician. I told his mother that it was quite possible some-

one else might be willing to coach him and exploit him in public; in this way he might well enhance any teacher's reputation, but if he studied with me he should not play in public until he was really ready to do so. Moreover, I urged that he should have an adequate general education. It is lucky for young List that his parents were not mercenary and that they consented to the plan I outlined.

We found a progressive high school in Philadelphia where Eugene had a special curriculum that left him sufficient time for piano practice. The wisdom shown by the school in doing this was amply repaid when he graduated second in a class of five hundred.

During the first two years of his study with me, Eugene lived with his mother and sister. A lonely father in California reminded me of my own father who was robbed of so much family life during my study abroad. Then Mrs. List told me she felt she must return to her husband.

Because I had insisted upon Eugene's retirement from the concert stage (which meant a considerable financial sacrifice to his family) I offered to take complete care of him. The first thing that seemed necessary to me was for him to have a summer at a boys' camp, forget about his piano and develop himself physically. Eugene had always been a good swimmer and tennis player. He was in complete accord with the camp idea and came back as brown and sturdy as any boy of his age could be. I put him to board, for the first winter he was alone, with his aunt by marriage, Dr. Hortense Ermann, in Philadelphia. She was a very clever physician and took such a liking to him that she gave him every care and had a fine influence upon him.

I was somewhat taken aback when, just after returning from

camp, Eugene asked whether I would object to his entering the contest for an appearance at one of the Youth Concerts of the Philadelphia Orchestra. These concerts had been created in order to arouse the interest of a new generation of concert-goers. No one over twenty-five was allowed to buy a ticket or attend the concerts. A youthful committee had charge of the promotion and of yearly contests in which soloists under twenty-five could compete for a place on Youth Concert programs. Eugene had just passed his sixteenth birthday.

Despite the fact that he had not practiced all summer, he won the contest. I did not know whether to be glad or sorry. He was almost ready for concert work but he had not yet graduated from high school and no debut had as yet been planned.

The Committee chose the Schumann concerto from among those he submitted as possibilities for his debut, but a few days later a telegram arrived:

"Can Eugene List learn and play the new Shostakovitch concerto—first performance in America?"

I did not know the new concerto myself and the idea of Eugene's learning a modern concerto, which was sure to be difficult, and playing it with the Philadelphia Orchestra on such short notice, seemed impossible. He was in his last year of high school and had only limited time for practice. I was in New York when the telegram arrived and it was soon followed by another one from Eugene in Philadelphia: "Please let me play the new concerto. I want to very much."

I had felt from the first that destiny was at work in the boy's life. By this time he had a magnificent technical equipment and a real musical understanding, in addition to the instinctive gifts

with which he was born. I knew he could do something very unusual under any circumstances, so I consented. This meant burning midnight oil over the Shostakovitch concerto myself, for I wanted to give Eugene all the help I could, but I enjoyed it.

Eugene's success at the Youth Concert surpassed my wildest hopes. He was at once recognized as one of the elect, and quite apart from my pride and joy in his triumph I felt a thrill that a young American could win his big opportunity on his own merits rather than buy it as so many had been forced to do in pre-war days. This feeling was increased when Arthur Judson came to me and said, "I am interested in that boy. I want him to play at one of the Sunday concerts of the orchestra. I want to hear him play a different type of concerto and solos. I will engage him for a spring concert."

On that occasion Eugene played the Schumann concerto and solo pieces by Chopin and Liszt. His success was just as great as at the Youth Concert. Arthur Judson then offered him a five-year contract. It was the kind of contract any European artist of established reputation would be glad to sign. Judson asked nothing beyond the customary 20 per cent of concert fees. There was no question of thousands of dollars to be advanced for Eugene's promotion, such as Wolfsohn had demanded of me. Judson treated Eugene as Ellis treated me.

Eugene's parents asked my advice, and although my heart sank at the thought of the strain under which the boy would be before he was twenty, I could not take the responsibility of suggesting that he should lose the great opportunity he had won for himself. At my suggestion the contract gave me a veto power in case I felt the concerts were too numerous to permit of the

musical growth Eugene still needed, but I never had to exercise this veto power for Judson has been most considerate and understanding.

Eugene graduated from high school and I took him to Europe for the summer to prepare for his coming concert season. In the autumn he won a fellowship in the Juilliard Graduate School. Until his successful debut he had studied at the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music, but I wanted to have him more constantly under my wing during his first concert season, so Mrs. Ezerman and I decided he should be transferred to the Juilliard and live in my New York apartment. I usually had one or two (one year, three) youngsters living there, and it was a pretty strict school of self-discipline in spite of some good times and many interesting experiences.

When I was thoroughly interested I watched over the reading of my young guests, sent them to the theatre, to operas and concerts, and tried to stimulate a general cultural development. I was unrelenting in musical demands with all my students, but those who lived in my house or spent summers with me in Maine or Europe had to learn much besides music.

In Eugene's case it was necessary to teach him how to live under the strain of concertizing. We had many a tussle. A pianist has to keep as fit as an athlete. Regular meals, sufficient exercise and enough sleep must be a part of the daily schedule no matter where one is. Eugene, a real artist and at the same time a real boy, had great difficulty in learning how to budget time and subordinate the impulse of the moment to the more important things of his life. His latch key was taken away from him several weeks before his first appearance with the New York Philharmonic—not because he could not be trusted to avoid harmful

dissipation but because he was still growing and needed sleep. He responded wonderfully and deserves all the success he has had on the concert stage.

As a rule I have had no serious trouble with my students. I failed with one very talented boy on whom I expended much of "dat feeling," as Schumann-Heink called my maternal instinct. Drink got him and it was a real sorrow to me. But all my other adopted musical children turned out well. If I ever became perfectly exasperated with one of them I wrote him or her a letter. On such occasions I trusted my pen more than my tongue. "Getting a letter from Madam" was the supreme disgrace in my classes.

Last spring, when Paul Nordoff's *Secular Mass* was performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra under the direction of Eugene Ormandy, Nordoff was reminiscing about his student days. Paul Nordoff was a piano pupil of Hendrik Ezerman and I took him over when I first went to teach at the Philadelphia Conservatory. His brilliant career furnishes another good example of the opportunities that now exist for young American musicians. After studying piano with me during my first season at the Philadelphia Conservatory he applied at the Juilliard for two fellowships, piano with me and composition with Rubin Goldmark. As a rule, double fellowships are not awarded at the Juilliard, but Nordoff's gifts were so unusual that an exception was made in his case. He became a wonderful pianist but never wanted to attempt a regular concert career because he wished to devote his time to composition.

Just after he graduated *cum laude* from the Juilliard, he won the Bearns prize of a thousand dollars and a Guggenheim fellowship which, being renewed, gave him two years of leisure for

composition in Europe. He is now professor of composition at the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music, and his compositions are arousing more and more interest.

Among his reminiscences at a party given for him and Eugene Ormandy after the performance of his *Secular Mass* by the Philadelphia Orchestra in the spring of 1938, was the experience of "getting a letter from Madam" during his first summer in my house in Maine. He had tried to drive my car—which was against the rules—and had knocked down my neighbor's fence. As Nordoff gave an amusing description of the emotions experienced by my students when they received a "letter from Madam," the distinguished conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy, at the other end of the table remarked mournfully, "I know all about it. I have had two myself!" As I have been intensely interested in this young conductor ever since he first began his career, he had not been spared some frank criticism!

But in spite of the letters, my students and I can look back on happy years. A house full of young people has been excellent for my own small daughter, besides saving her from being drowned in an excess of "dat feeling."

A typical picture of life in my New York apartment comes to my mind as I think of a day when a man came to see me on important business. I had just returned from the Juilliard and found him in the hall. I soon realized that every corner of the apartment was occupied. Two pianists were rehearsing in the drawing-room, a committee meeting was in progress in the dining-room, a debutante pianist was trying on concert dresses in my room, Sonya was having a German lesson in her room, a student who was living with us was working at counterpoint in the guest-



room and there was nothing left but the hall and the kitchen. I ordered the car and took my caller to the Colony Club.

As I write, Joseph Battista, the son of Italian parents living in Philadelphia, is spending the summer with us in Europe after winning the same contest for an appearance at a Youth Concert of the Philadelphia Orchestra that gave Eugene List his successful debut. He will play with the Philadelphia Orchestra next season and he has the talent, the personality and the capacity for work that should mean an important career. The fountain of musical talent in America seems inexhaustible, and it springs from sources in every corner of Europe.

In order to prepare my students for public playing I hold fortnightly evening classes in my New York apartment during the winter. Supper is served at narrow tables placed around the walls in the manner of a restaurant. This enables me to seat a great many people. Simple food is served, and after supper the youngsters play. My guests belong to every walk of life. The only requisite is a real interest in music. The students know they may be playing for an important manager, a conductor, some foreign personage in the musical world or American art patrons whose interest might prove to be most valuable, so they are on tiptoe. It gives them an experience in playing which I so woe-folly lacked when I made my debut, and they also get stiff criticism from "Madam," for in teaching I have consistently tried to give my students what I had most needed—and often lacked—in building up my own professional life. As this becomes increasingly clear to me, it seems to justify Dr. Noble's ideas with regard to a faculty of artist-teachers at the Juilliard. Delaborde, my teacher at the Paris Conservatoire, had played very little in con-

certs. The international musical world was unknown to him. He never even inquired about my general education or degree of culture. He gave me piano lessons and closed the door. Luckily I had parents and a grandmother who did all the rest, but I have often wondered what kind of human being I would have been if I had had nothing but Delaborde's piano lessons and life in a cheap French pension. He was undoubtedly a competent and experienced teacher, but where are his artist-pupils? Liszt and Rubinstein took a personal interest in their pupils, and are said to have exercised an influence on life as well as art. Probably that is one reason why they produced great pupils.

The things we still lack in America are artistic atmosphere, a higher general standard of culture and an interest in worth-while pursuits. The greatest danger to the serious student of music or other arts in America is *triviality*. The desire for entertainment that requires no mental effort whatsoever is widespread, and accounts for most of the trash we hear over the radio or see on the screen. The European student takes such an interest in cultural things that they normally form an important part of his pleasures. In this way his free time is frequently filled with things that provide both enjoyment and development. It is enlightening to note the difference between the conversation of an average group of young Americans and a corresponding European group.

All work and no play would be bad for any young person, but whereas the European student arranges his life on the basis of a maximum amount of work relieved by a few hours of relaxation reserved for pleasure, the American of the same age is inclined to regard life as primarily devoted to enjoyment, except for the minimum of work which will get him through school.

In my own experience as a teacher, the American responds

well when stiff demands are put upon him, but the hardest thing to combat is the infectious triviality of taste which surrounds him and which leads him to regard the reading of a great book, a serious play at the theatre, visits to an art gallery or any of the more cultural pleasures as *work*.

If all the free hours of an American student are given over to nonsense and triviality, it naturally takes him ten years to acquire the degree of general culture that the European of the same type possesses before he is twenty-one. For this reason I take outstanding students to Europe whenever I can, and I have been fortunate in discovering a place which affords them a liberal education during the summer months—Haus Hirth in Untergrainau near Garmisch.

Before the war, Georg Hirth was the greatest publisher in southern Germany. The Hirth palace in Munich was a gathering place for intellectuals and artists. One of Georg Hirth's sons, Walther, who had a pronounced artistic bent, built a charming house in peasant style for his mother near the unspoiled villages of Ober- and Untergrainau, and not far from Garmisch in the heart of the Bavarian Alps. When Georg Hirth died during the war, Walther Hirth took refuge in this peasant house, after narrowly escaping death during the Communist uprising in Munich in 1919. After his fortune had been entirely swept away in the inflation and the Munich palace with its priceless collections of art treasures had been sold at auction, Walther Hirth and his charming wife, daughter of the former Chief Justice of the Grand Duchy of Hesse and sister of the famous artist Emil Preetorius, were obliged to take paying guests. The peasant house near Untergrainau became Haus Hirth.

Only people who were known to the Hirths or their friends

were accepted. Gradually the circle of guests who returned each year to Haus Hirth widened to include so many distinguished and interesting people that it has become famous.

Johanna and Walther Hirth are such artists in living that they have managed to create an atmosphere in which distinction and simplicity are wonderfully blended. The house itself reflects this same curious combination. A rural simplicity furnishes the keynote, but the silver and linen are exquisite and all sorts of things salvaged from the wreckage of former grandeur are to be found throughout the house, lending a note of quiet elegance. A profusion of books and flowers add to the guests' enjoyment, and the vegetables, fresh eggs and honey produced on the place are unsurpassed. Numerous bathrooms and central heating add to the comfort with which the Hirths surround their guests, and each bedroom is fitted up to satisfy every need.

Best of all, the human qualities of the host and hostess make a sojourn at Haus Hirth a unique experience. They are "Tante Johanna" and "Onkel Walther" to all the young people. Their unaffected interest in their guests, their unfailing kindness and the charm and wit with which they enliven meal-times endear them to everyone who has the privilege of staying under their roof. Walther's English is unlike anybody else's. Samples of Waltheriana which have convulsed his English and American guests are the following equivalents in English of German phrases he was trying to explain: "Gesegnet sei Ihr Eingang" (an old German text carved above a doorway and meaning "May your entrance be blessed") translated by Walther "God bless your income"; "Leibjäger" (bodyguard) literally translated by Walther "tummy-hunter"; and "rock-bottom" given in Walther's own picturesque English as "stone sit-upon." It may be imagined



*Marcella Sembrich welcomes Sonya Stokowski (who was born in London) to America.*



how these linguistic peculiarities add to the merriment of life at Haus Hirth.

If a guest proves to be disagreeable, he quietly disappears. His room is needed and the house is always full if he later writes to inquire about rooms. Among the regular guests that have returned year after year are such Germans as the Grand Ducal family of Hesse (now reduced, by the death of the former Grand Duke and the terrible airplane accident in which his widow and the family of his eldest son lost their lives, to Prince Ludwig, his charming English wife Princess Margaret, and little Princess Johanna, sole survivor of the elder branch, who is named for her Godmother Johanna Hirth); such Americans as George Vincent, former president of the Rockefeller Foundation, and America's great actress, Katherine Cornell; such Britishers as Lord Esher and the writer, Clemence Dane; such orientals as the son of Chiang Kai-shek, and a long list of artists, intellectuals, diplomats and delightful human beings who may have no profession but who greatly add to the joy of life in Haus Hirth. Johanna Hirth has a most remarkable personality and exercises a great influence upon the life around her, and particularly upon young people. They all admire her beauty and wit, and if any serious problem arises they find rare understanding and wisdom in the counsel she gives. I know of no human being, man or woman, who has given more help to others than Johanna Hirth. She seems to know exactly what to do, whether somebody gets stung by a wasp, falls off a horse, needs a job or has an unhappy love affair. Her friends are legion and she manages in some miraculous way, in spite of being busy from morning until night, to keep in touch with them whether they live in Europe, America or Asia.

Everybody is perfectly free at Haus Hirth and I know of no

better place in which to work. In Haus Hirth my students have learned to know young Europeans of their own age whose general culture has exercised a most salutary influence. They have also made important friends. When Paul Nordoff first visited me in Haus Hirth he formed the connections that eventually led to the first publication of his music by Schott and Söhne in Mainz. I owe so much to the summers spent at Haus Hirth that this book—which is being written there—would not be complete without a tribute to what it has meant to my students as well as to me.

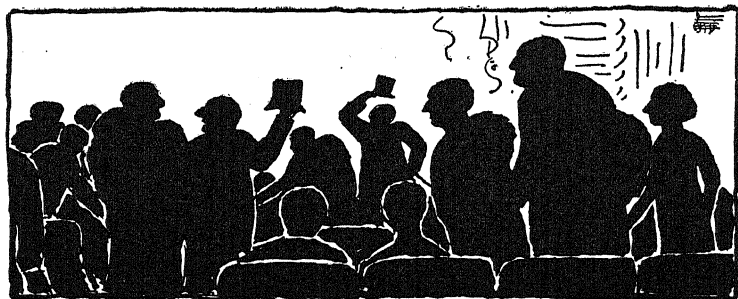
Despite the difficulty I have described of creating a certain atmosphere so valuable to artistic development, I am happy that I can work at music in the United States. To uphold venerable traditions is valuable and necessary, but the consciousness of something in-the-making is still more thrilling. The musical outlook for the United States is bright, because talent is abundant and the educational advantages splendid.

I have written chiefly about the schools I know best—the Juilliard Foundation and the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music. They may be said to represent the main American types—the endowed school organized on a fellowship basis, and the regular Conservatory of Music which serves the citizen who pays for his child's musical education.

There are others that could claim a high place in any exhaustive treatise on post-war musical educational developments. The Eastman School of Music in Rochester, generously endowed by George Eastman and admirably directed by Howard Hanson, has become very important. The New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore and other well-known music schools boast a fine record of musical service that extends back to pre-war days. But it was only after the war that



America dropped its "colonial" dependence on Europe, and through the extension and superb development of educational opportunities came of age as a world music center.



*"The last scene of Tristan and Isolde as seen from subscribers' seats at the Metropolitan Opera House."*

*During her activity as Music Editor of the New York Evening Post, the author not only criticized musicians and critics but occasionally assailed the bad habits of audiences. At her suggestion, Amy C. Montague made the significant sketch which satirized those to whom the problems of leaving the opera house are more important than the music of the "Liebestod." It was published in the author's daily column.*

# 11

## THE LIFE OF A MUSIC CRITIC IN NEW YORK

---

As a child, I could never hear enough of my grandmother's plantation stories. When she reminisced of her father's plantation on the Mississippi and of the palatial steamboats that plied up and down the river, stopping at the plantation landings to take the planters and their families down to New Orleans for the French Opera or for Mardi Gras, I was always fascinated, especially when she sketched the characters of the young planters who gambled away fortunes on these boats and helped to make a little Paris of New Orleans.

There was one story to which she attached an almost superstitious importance.

At Christmas, it was the custom for my grandmother and her sisters to give the house slaves their presents. The slaves, having no possibility of giving presents in return, responded with a wish. All uneducated Negroes love to use long words whether or not they understand the meaning. The old family coachman, Louis, had evidently spent much thought on his wish for my grandmother, one Christmas shortly before her marriage. When she

handed him his present, he said gravely, "Miss Lucie, I wishes you *plenty o' circulation!*"

My grandmother always felt that old Louis had wished something on the entire family, for we have all been knocked about the world ever since.

In my own existence Fate "circulated" me from one musical activity to another. Although I had established a summer home in Seal Harbor immediately after leaving Philadelphia, I spent several winters in New York in furnished apartments which I rented for the season. In the autumn of 1925, I was looking about for such a place, when Mrs. John Garrett of Baltimore suggested that I should share an apartment on Park Avenue which she maintained as a *pied-à-terre* in New York. John Garrett had been long in our diplomatic service. Just after the war he had been United States Minister to the Netherlands, and later he became Ambassador to Italy, but at the time of which I write the Garretts were living in Baltimore and also maintained an apartment in New York which enabled them to enjoy as much as they wished of the life of the metropolis.

Their *pied-à-terre* was a spacious apartment on Park Avenue and there was plenty of room for the proposed plan. Although it is dangerous to try such experiments with friends, I knew the John Garretts well enough to believe the venture might be successful, and it was. It also brought about profound changes in my life through an accident that was nobody's fault.

One morning Mrs. Garrett was preparing to leave for Baltimore. I intended departing for a concert tour before her return, so I went into her room to say good-by. While I was speaking with Mrs. Garrett, her maid placed a low brown trunk beside her door in a hallway that was usually empty. I came out of the door

in a hurry, looking back over my shoulder as I was still speaking with Mrs. Garrett. Not expecting anything to be in the hall and failing to see the trunk, I fell over it and twisted my left arm. I picked myself up, conscious that I had hurt my arm but never dreaming how serious the injury would prove to be. The Garretts, much alarmed by the thud of my fall, rushed to the rescue and offered to do anything they could. I made light of my troubles, however, and went off to have the arm X-rayed. The verdict was "nothing broken," so I left that night for Chicago and played an entire recital program there which, with encores, kept me on the stage for more than two hours. The excitement of playing acted as an anaesthetic during the concert, but I was in agony all the rest of the time. A recital the following day in Memphis greatly increased my suffering.

Luckily my next concert engagement was in St. Louis where my family was living, and their physician, Dr. von Starkloff, found what the X-ray had failed to reveal—a badly torn ligament. He told me that I should probably have to keep my arm in a sling for a year. The concerts I had played had greatly aggravated the inflammation and no one could set a torn ligament. Thus from one day to another I was thrown out of a profession which at the time had seemed to be the very center of life. All my concerts were canceled for the rest of the season, and I was just trying to find myself in a topsy-turvy world when I was unexpectedly thrown into a new musical activity. I became music critic of the *New York Evening Post*.

In addition to a highly valued personal friendship with the Bok family of Philadelphia, a curious combination of circumstances seems to associate them with the crises in my life. Some years before the time of which I write, Edward Bok had asked me

to contribute an article on "The Kitchen" to the *Ladies' Home Journal* of which he was then editor. He did me the honor to consider me a competent housekeeper, and the object of the article was to demonstrate the fact that an artist could take an interest in the home. As a matter of fact, it seems to me nothing could be more stimulating to a desire for a well-ordered household than knocking about for years on trains and in hotels. At least that is the effect the life of a concert pianist had had upon me.

The article on "The Kitchen" had given the Boks the idea that I could write. Mrs. Bok's father, Cyrus Curtis, was the owner of the *New York Evening Post* in 1925, and when Ernest Newman, the well-known English music critic who had been writing for the paper, returned to England, the editor was seeking someone "with a name" to succeed him. Mrs. Bok suggested me and the editor agreed with her that it might be an interesting experiment to have a musician undertake the music column.

It was daring of Mrs. Bok to recommend me, and still more so for me to accept the offer, but there was something—unknown even to my intimate friends—which gave me the courage to do it: *I had been writing all my life.*

Writing was my avocation from the time when I penned a bloody tragedy at the age of twelve. I never attached any importance to my scribblings and tossed them aside as soon as they were finished. I rarely showed them to anyone, but I was amazed when I opened an old steamer trunk one day in Seal Harbor to find how much I had written. I had tried my hand at plays, poems, essays and fiction. The manuscripts were rolled up just as I had left them when the duties of life had called. I realized as I browsed among my forgotten literary efforts how much of an escape this world of the imagination had been to me at times when the

routine of my concert career had been unsympathetic or when life had brought its hours of struggle and sadness. Writing had been to me what music often is to people who have other major activities. Possibly if the circumstances of my life had not led to music as a profession, I would have been a writer who pursued music as an avocation. In any case, the writing I had done gave me confidence that I could express my thoughts and opinions without much difficulty. This impulse to write was perhaps the real cause of "the letters from Madam" described in the preceding chapter.

I threw myself into the adventure of musical journalism with lively curiosity and very decided opinions as to how I would conduct my column. These opinions were not new. Like every musician I had thought much about the question of musical criticism.

My business negotiations with the editor of the *Evening Post* are amusing in retrospect. I had always hated everything connected with business. Filing papers was my *bête noire* and my father always said that if managers only knew what a poor business woman I was, anything might be put in my contracts because I never read them before signing them. I was born trusting the human race.

The editor of the *Evening Post* for some reason did not make me a straight financial offer but asked what I would require as a salary. This was most inconvenient as I had not the slightest idea what the salary of a music critic might be. One of my intimate friends, Mrs. Gilbert H. Montague, was a cousin of Richard Aldrich, music critic of the *New York Times*. I begged her to make some discreet inquiries for me, but she telephoned that she "could get nothing out of Dick."

By this time it was known that I was teaching at the Juilliard

Graduate School, and I constantly had applications from people who wished to study with me privately. As long as I was concertizing, the teaching in the school was all I could manage, but it seemed logical that if I were not otherwise occupied I would accept these pupils. I therefore decided to make out a budget of what I might earn if I filled my time with private teaching. I wrote the editor frankly that this was the only way I could think of by which I could arrive at some idea of what my time was worth. He replied that the sum I mentioned was a thousand dollars a year more than the *Evening Post* had paid Ernest Newman, but that he accepted my conditions. Thus, fantastically enough, before I had written a line I was assured the highest salary a music critic could command. Ignorance proved to be highly remunerative.

The first thing I did was to write my *credo*. I made it clear that I did not believe in musical criticism as "a tribunal before which musicians are tried." My column would contain quite simply the opinion of an individual. I refused to play Almighty God in a newspaper.

The treatment accorded me personally as a pianist by critics in general had been so prevailingly good that I had nothing to complain of, but in the course of the many years during which I had been in the thick of professional life I had witnessed things that seemed to point to a callous and careless use of the great power of the press by some critics.

There were three things which happened all too frequently in New York musical criticism. One was publishing a criticism of something the critic had not heard. On one occasion of which I had knowledge, an adverse criticism of a concert which never took place at all was published in a New York newspaper. The

artist had canceled at the last moment, and the critic published an enlightening account of how badly the artist had played. This also happened in connection with portions of a program which the critic had not heard. The younger assistant critics of those New York papers that had a staff of several reviewers (which the *Evening Post* did not have at that time) called themselves the "polytonal chain-gang." It was their duty to "cover" all the musical events which the chief critic could not personally attend. It was obviously impossible for them to sit through any single performance. They wandered from one to another and everything would have been all right if they had only written about what they actually heard, but I frequently heard one of them upon entering the hall ask another how X had played Bach earlier in the program. To take somebody else's word for it that X's Bach was good or bad seemed all wrong to me. I received the impression that a good deal of second-hand opinion went into New York reviews in those days.

The second thing that seemed entirely useless was a pretense of knowledge which the critic did not possess. Strange musical mistakes were often made and never questioned. For instance, a London critic had highly praised the César Franck Piano and Violin Sonata. Totally ignorant of the fact that César Franck himself had made an arrangement of the same sonata for piano and cello, this learned critic proceeded to inform the London public that "the César Franck cello sonata was very inferior as music to the violin sonata."

The third thing which has always seemed to me to be unworthy in musical criticism is ridicule—sacrificing a serious artist to a wisecrack. I like humor as well as anybody but I also know what it means to arrive at the point which permits one to play a



Brahms concerto with the Philharmonic. Even if the performance is not good, a sincere effort of that magnitude deserves something better than a piece of obvious and rather cheap ridicule.

I was in a peculiar position as music critic of the *New York Evening Post*. I had undertaken to criticize my musical colleagues. It seemed to me, therefore, that having undertaken that, there could be no reason why I should not also criticize my journalistic colleagues and frankly discuss the problems of musical criticism as I had observed them on both sides of the footlights. For the first time—so far as I know—a criticism of criticism appeared in a New York paper. As a rule, professional ethics precluded such a procedure, but I felt that an airing of existing abuses was more important than observing the so-called ethics which seemed rather absurd in view of the nature of criticism itself. It was as though someone would say, "You may shoot at A because it is for the good of art that his shortcomings should be publicly proclaimed, but you may not shoot at B because it is for the good of journalism that his shortcomings should be hidden." I felt, on the contrary, that it was distinctly for the good of journalism to look facts in the face because the callousness—and sometimes cruelty—that occasionally showed itself marred a profession in which some fine and scholarly men were doing brilliant writing that played an important part in the destiny of music and musicians.

I was not the only professional musician who had turned critic. In the past, Weber, Schumann, Berlioz and Debussy had acted in this capacity. In my day, De Koven and later Deems Taylor had written musical criticism. In fact, Deems Taylor and I were once pitted against each other in a lively debate before the Fortnightly Club in New York. He was evidently overwhelmed by the number of musical events in the metropolis and strongly

advocated the discouragement of youthful aspirants for a professional career. He concluded his remarks with the idea that there were too many musicians just as there are too many cats. The critic's activity was the equivalent of the necessary drowning of some kittens. With the collection of my "Comedy of Musical Errors" fresh in my mind I retorted with the question "What about the danger of drowning the wrong cat?" Unless one claims infallibility, it is scarcely possible to forget the ardent and doubtless sincere critics who tried to drown Beethoven, Wagner, and most of the other great composers.

When I began my activities as critic on the *Evening Post*, I was tactfully informed that as I had never made headlines or edited a weekly music page, I should have the assistance of an experienced journalist, and one was assigned to my department by the editor. He had worked in almost every department of the paper from finance to sport. It was quite clear to me when I met this gentleman, who shall hereafter be called Mr. E. J. (experienced journalist), that he did not like me. Obviously he regarded me as an interloper.

I therefore decided that the less I haunted the offices of the *Post*, the better it would be, so it was arranged that a boy should call for my copy every morning at eight o'clock. This meant that the reviews of a performance the night before would have to be written in the middle of the night or at the crack of dawn. My dear friend, Frederick Steinway, was quite worried about the strain of writing all this in longhand, for no stenographer was available at these hours and I had never learned to use a typewriter. He offered to present me with a dictograph. I warned him that I was not good at dictating anything beyond practical letters. For everything else I preferred a pad and pencil. Mr. Steinway

kindly insisted, however, and sent the machine to my apartment on approval. I shall never forget sitting in front of that thing in the middle of the night and I am glad that nobody but myself heard what came out of it after I had dictated my article. The dictograph was returned with thanks and I clung to my trusty pad and pencil.

Incidentally, some skeptics launched a rumor that I employed a ghost-writer. Not knowing that I had had a long experience in writing, they could not quite accept a pianist turned critic overnight. As pianist, I had formerly been a specialist in music, and although I had read a great deal out of sheer interest in the history of music and the lives of composers, I was filled with ambition to fit myself for my new task with professional thoroughness. As I worked over the filling up of holes in my general knowledge, which were numerous in spite of a lifetime spent in music, I realized how absurd it is to expect one human being to write about every branch of music with anything approaching authority. An instinctive rebellion against such a premise had impelled me from the beginning to use the first person singular in writing my articles rather than the customary journalistic impersonality which somehow seems to surround the individual writer with the power of the press itself. There is a vast difference between writing "I found the singer cold" and stating "the singer was cold."

It soon became apparent that the dyed-in-the-wool journalist of the old school did not take the matter of knowledge so seriously. Mr. E. J. began to make some very bad mistakes in editing my weekly music page. He assembled the advance material sent in by managers and musicians and revised or curtailed it to fit the page. This is usually done or supervised by the chief music critic—who is called musical editor—but in spite of my high salary I

had not been asked to do this, presumably because of my journalistic inexperience. I only furnished an informative article of fifteen hundred or two thousand words for the weekly music page which appeared in the Saturday afternoon issue.

Although I had nothing to do with the editing of this page, I knew that most people would think I did; therefore I was considerably upset when Mr. E. J. used the word Schumann instead of Schubert all the way through an announcement of a Schubert Chamber Music Concert series that was to be given by the Elshuco Trio. To write of "Schumann's Forellen-Quintett" is like attributing *Pickwick Papers* to Thackeray.

I was even more afflicted when the headline of an article I had written on the origin of opera read in bold type:

**"Opera begins in Greece  
in the 17th Century."**

Had Mr. E. J. not read my article, in which I alluded to the desire to revive the Greek use of music in connection with drama which is supposed to have influenced the pioneers of opera in Florence, or did he know better and simply wish to discredit the interloper?

This question might never have arisen in my mind had I not had one or two strange experiences. A review I wrote of a Boston Symphony concert was printed with alterations which substituted the name of one Scriabin tone poem for another. Any fool could have read the correct title in the printed program even without knowing the music. The mistake which had so mysteriously crept into my article made it appear as though I had not been present at the concert. Still more indicative of some hostile intent on some-

body's part was my experience the morning after the première of Deems Taylor's opera, *The King's Henchman*.

I had given myself no end of trouble on this occasion. The première of an American opera at the Metropolitan Opera in New York was important from every point of view. I had been to the dress rehearsal; I had written part of my article dealing with impressions of music and text after the rehearsal so as to have more time for it. I had then added impressions of the performance and reception by the audience in the wee small hours after the première. I even set my alarm clock for six A.M. so as to go over the whole thing once more. Then I settled down to examine the reviews in the morning papers, for I read every New York paper every day while I was critic.

I noticed at once that the morning papers had given front-page space to *The King's Henchman*, so I realized that it was more than ever important to have my copy sent on time. At eight o'clock the boy from the *Evening Post* did not appear. At five minutes past eight I called up the office. A voice replied that Mr. E. J. had not come in, but "the boy must be on the way." I was always supposed to call Mr. E. J. if I needed anything, and he was supposed to be on hand when my copy arrived.

At ten minutes past eight I telephoned the city editor, explained the situation and asked if I should send the copy by special messenger. "Don't lose a minute," was his answer, "we want your stuff for the front page." I sent the copy by my own maid.

At a quarter-past eight I called Mr. E. J.'s office again. He was still absent but I was urged to wait for the boy "who must arrive any minute." The boy never arrived at all that morning and his absence was never explained. I never questioned the boy

himself and he offered no excuse. I did not really want to know it if somebody had tried to throw me out of the saddle. I knew enough to be very careful in the future.

Gradually I took over the writing of my own headlines and a certain supervision of the music page. Meanwhile I struggled desperately to review all the concerts and operas I could, for I had no regular assistants. The events I could not "cover" were reviewed by writers who signed initials. I never knew them. They probably wrote much better than I did according to the canons of journalism, but the musical value of their reviews was slight. I gained some insight into the editorial psychology concerning music critics when the city editor asked me to see a young man and report what I thought of his possibilities as an assistant. My first question when the young man arrived was, "Where did you study music?" "I have never studied music," he replied, "but I know what I like." Further conversation proved that "knowing what he liked" was about the only musical qualifications the young man possessed. When I asked the city editor why he had considered this particular individual for the music department, he replied, "I have seen some of his stuff. He has a flair for journalism."

A flair for journalism apparently justifies throwing a writer into any department of a paper, at least in a subordinate capacity. Unluckily, so many clichés are used in the criticism of the arts that it is dangerously easy to piece them together and produce a jargon that appears to be based on knowledge. Another reason why the public should never regard musical criticism as infallible!

I soon found that I was earning every penny of my handsome salary. No life that I know anything about is more taxing than

that of a New York music critic, if he is serious and conscientious. Although I have freely criticized what I believed to be wrong in the psychology or the current methods of musical criticism in New York, I have a real respect—and a great deal of personal liking—for the men who accomplish this huge task with sincerity and integrity. There is one thing of which the New York press may be particularly proud—and that is that there is no such thing as corruption among the critics. Occasionally foreign artists who have not succeeded in New York tell stories of how the critics there are “bought” by the successful artists. I am convinced these stories are lies. If such a thing were considered possible, I would have been approached by somebody in the course of two years. Such a thing never happened. The only direct attempts to influence my opinion were made by William Guard, former press agent of the Metropolitan Opera House, and by an official of my own paper.

Guard was an amiable soul and popular with everybody. The journalists depended upon him for news of the opera house and he had a hail-fellow-well-met attitude towards critics. One day, in the intermission of a dress rehearsal at the opera, he took me by the arm and walked me up and down the lobby conversing along the following lines:

“Look here, young lady, I have something on my mind. You’re swell and here are my cards on the table. You’re giving an awful lot of space to Bodanzky and very little to Serafin. Now Bodanzky’s all right. I love him, although he has no heart, but believe me the man that holds up this opera house is Serafin. He’s got a heart all right and he is feeling pretty sore over the way you’re neglecting him. I know you haven’t ‘roasted’ him or anything

like that, but you don't give him the space. And God knows what we would do without Serafin! We could replace Bodanzky tomorrow but if Serafin got sore and left—good-by."

I let him say everything he had to say and then gently reminded him that I had to write according to my honest conviction. Now that Bodanzky has come into his own and is universally recognized, it is difficult to remember that in those days he was often severely criticized or dismissed with the single sentence "Mr. Bodanzky conducted." My reviews of his conducting were therefore conspicuous. I am sure Billy Guard meant no harm, but I also suspect he used the power of suggestion, with or without result, in the press room of the Metropolitan which I never visited because there was no particular reason why I should. I needed no facilities for writing as I did not have to reckon with the evening "deadline" that harassed the critics of morning papers.

My experience with the official on my paper was in connection with Marion Talley's debut. We had spoken about something else over the telephone. Then he said: "By the way, somebody ought to give that Talley girl the devil tomorrow. I am sick of all this publicity that is going on." I am sure that the remark was unpremeditated. Everybody was sick of the Talley publicity. One could not pick up a newspaper without finding columns about the special train from Kansas City that was bringing the admirers of the new coloratura star from her home town to witness her triumph at the Metropolitan Opera House. But the idea that anyone should "give her the devil" because of it, prompted me to ask a few questions. Could such publicity be bought in our American press, I inquired, and if so, how? The city editor replied with some heat that such publicity could not be bought. He added that a clever newspaper woman in Kansas City had started the whole thing.



"Let me ask another question," I persisted. "Supposing that Marion Talley would like to stop this publicity, could she do it?"

The time was still fresh in my mind when the events of my private life had put reporters on my trail and I had had the greatest difficulty in dodging unwelcome publicity. In that connection I remembered one young reporter who had caught me as I was coming out of the stage door of the Brooklyn Academy where I had just played. He told me that if he went back to the office without the story he had been sent to get, he might lose his job. I replied that I would be glad to help him get another job but I could not break my rule that I would never speak of my private affairs for publication. The boy was a gentleman. He raised his hat and left me. But I knew enough of reporters' tactics to realize how difficult it would be for Marion Talley to arrest the avalanche of publicity that had overtaken her.

"It would be hard to stop it now," admitted the city editor. "It is a whale of a story and the boys are after more, but just the same . . ."

"Just the same," I interrupted, "I shall write exactly what I think. Why should I give anybody the devil for publicity they can neither buy nor stop?"

On one occasion my aversion to having anything about my private affairs in the newspaper had led to a comical result. A reporter came to interview me at the home of my parents in St. Louis where I was about to play in a concert. He seemed determined to ask personal questions of a type I always found objectionable. I was diligently dodging the issue when he espied a signed photograph of President Taft on the piano. I had just played at the White House and had brought the highly prized photograph to show to my parents. President Taft made no secret

of his indifference to music. Indeed, he always said he disliked it, but one thing on the program I played had struck his fancy. It was Ernest Hutcheson's piano arrangement of Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries*. President Taft's inscription on the photograph contained a humorous allusion to his surrender to the *Ride*.

The reporter asked me what the *Ride of the Valkyries* might be and I felt that a little lecture on Wagner was a safe escape from the unwelcome subject of my personal affairs.

The following day my father greeted me with the question, "Have you lost your mind?" He then showed me the afternoon paper. A headline in bold type congealed my blood: "President Taft takes wild ride through clouds with Young Pianist." It scarcely restored my circulation when I read below that the wild ride was taken "in imagination as the President listened to the surging strains of Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* as played by Olga Samaroff." I rushed to the nearest telegraph office and spent a small fortune wiring to a friend at court an explanation to be given to the President. Word came back that the President was highly amused, but I did not soon recover from the shock. The great god publicity is a strange power everywhere, but he seems to be particularly difficult to manage in the United States. Without publicity, no wars can be fought, no state can be governed, no public career as actor or musician can be made, no business can prosper. To control the kind and amount of publicity, to avoid the vulgar, the trivial and the grotesque, is no easy matter. Hence the high-priced press agent and advertising expert. When one is music critic on a New York newspaper one realizes the industry and ingenuity with which these experienced agents seek publicity for their employers. "Releases" pour in every week.

Undoubtedly, Marion Talley's whole career would have been

different if her debut had taken place without all the unpleasant publicity that surrounded it. Her "human interest story" brought such crowds to the streets surrounding the opera house on the night of her debut that the police had to be called out. Doubtless some of the criticism she received the following day was based on the discrepancy between her performance and the hubbub that had preceded it. It is difficult to be objective in the midst of such sensationalism. Most of the critics were unduly severe in consequence of it.

I feel sure that if Talley had made her debut in some foreign opera house where the presence of youth is taken as a matter of course, she would have proceeded to make a normal and long-continued career. She had a lovely natural voice, and Bodanzky and other musicians at the opera told me she was a splendid worker.

As I learned to know more about newspaper work in New York, I wanted more and more to know the real nature of public reaction to criticism. A New York critic constantly receives letters from readers, but most of those that came to me merely contained comments on some article I had written. I received praise from the reader who agreed with me, and bitter complaints from friends or relatives of artists whose performances had been adversely criticized. As I wanted to know more about general psychology and the real relation of the public to the critic, as well as the real value of the critic to the public, I organized a forum on musical criticism and invited questions.

The response was overwhelming and most enlightening. One truth became glaringly apparent. *The public enjoys adverse criticism.*

One correspondent wrote complainingly that he felt I was not

severe enough because I had written favorable reviews every day for a whole week. The idea that one might easily find praiseworthy musical events throughout a whole week in a city like New York did not seem to occur to him. Apparently he felt that by Wednesday or Thursday I should have written some adverse criticism just on general principles. Some people seem to think that it requires courage to write adverse criticism. My forum in the *New York Evening Post* gave me the conviction that it takes much more courage to praise, in view of the almost sadistic delight of the public in severe adverse criticism. Such criticism seems to increase their confidence in the critic.

During the progress of this forum, one of the younger critics told me he felt I was "too hard on the profession. Anybody could make a mistake once in a while." I had been somewhat merciless in dealing with journalistic inaccuracies. It seemed to me that if it was permissible to publish the opinion that a great musician had a mistaken idea of tempo in a certain performance, there was no reason why one should not write about the mistake of a critic who attacked the performance of a certain tenor at the opera when he had not sung at all on the evening in question. The tenor had given out at the last minute and the critic had not noticed that someone else was singing. Or perhaps the critic was not there.

My reply to the complaint that I was "too hard on the profession" was that mistakes could be easily avoided if music critics would follow two simple rules:

1. Never criticize something they had not heard.
2. Never pretend to knowledge they did not possess.

It was not very sympathetic to me to walk in reformer's shoes, but I am not sorry that I took a shot at a hard-boiled carelessness

that is unworthy of the responsibility borne by every individual who wields the great power of the press.

When Julian Mason, who had become editor of the *New York Evening Post*, offered me a further three-year contract as music critic at the same salary I was receiving, I had already formulated the conditions under which I would be willing to sign it. Conversations with Mr. Mason had led me to expect the offer, and I had gradually made a plan of a music department according to the ideas that had been born of my observations and experiences.

Before submitting my plan to Julian Mason, I sent it to Mrs. Bok. This extraordinary woman, whose benefactions to music would fill a whole volume, had obtained the position of critic for me, so I felt it was only right to consult her. Also I wanted her advice, for my ideas were rather revolutionary and in some details experimental. I asked her for uncompromising criticism.

My plan was built on the basic idea that it would be much more valuable to the public to receive stimulating information *before* an important musical event than to read after the performance was over that Mr. X had conducted too fast or Madame Y had sung out of tune. A certain amount of information is usually given in weekly articles by leading critics, but my plan provided for a much more systematic and extended informative service. It provided for a children's corner, for regular articles furnished by leading personalities of the musical world who would write on their specialties, and for a forum where questions from the public would be answered. I also demanded two competent assistants and complete control of the music page.

With Mrs. Bok's permission I will describe the course of events. She wrote me that she thought well enough of my plan

to put five thousand dollars a year for three years at my disposal in order to carry it out. She pointed out that the type of assistants I wanted and the guest writers would make it expensive. I had not thought in terms of dollars and cents in making the plan, but she had at once perceived this difficulty. She made only one condition, namely, that no one should know of her participation in the project. She advised me to submit the plan to Julian Mason on the basis that I would provide the entire department without any further expense to the *Evening Post*.

Mr. Julian Mason did not like music. He said so frankly. Perhaps that was the basic reason for his reaction to my plan. He said it would make the music department too conspicuous, that the other departments would grow restive and begin to make similar demands. In short, he rejected my plan and urged me to continue for three years on the old basis, but despite the handsome salary, I refused.

Years afterwards, at my request, Mrs. Bok told Julian Mason of her part in the affair. I am still convinced that such a music department in a newspaper would fill a most important place in musical life, but it is just as well Mr. Julian Mason prevented me from undertaking it. Fate had other work for me to do.

# 12

## THE SCHUBERT MEMORIAL

### An Attack on National Prejudices

---

IT WAS on a warm October afternoon in 1928 that John Erskine affixed his signature—the last on the page—to a document that has not been without its importance in American musical development of the last decade.

I had asked the distinguished author, then president of the Juilliard Foundation, to meet me at the Colony Club—a convenient place in view of our engagements that day—and sign the Certificate of Incorporation of the Schubert Memorial.

The names of the incorporators were:

Cornelius N. Bliss

Lizzie P. Bliss

John Erskine

Walter W. Price

Olga Samaroff Stokowski

Some explanation must precede the definition of "Schubert Memorial." When I left the *Evening Post*, the question whether or not I should return to the concert stage became acute, for my arm was well and offers of engagements were numerous. I found,

however, that the old lack of enthusiasm for the life of a concert pianist had increased. There was so much else I wanted to do. I was deeply interested in writing a novel. It may or may not ever see the light of day, but at that time I was deeply engrossed in it. Each year my little daughter needed more of my time and attention, and, in addition, my piano pupils were presenting a problem that had been causing me increasing anxiety.

The question, What does the future hold for these youngsters?, left me no peace. It is very convenient and simple to put such a thought aside with the theory that "big talent will always come out on top." This theory relieves everybody of responsibility. Those who believe it can enjoy life and leave the talented to their struggles. But I have been obsessed by the idea that if it is possible for the world to neglect a Schubert and let a Mozart die in poverty, it might easily overlook a talented performer. Luckily the works of the composer can survive him, and posterity can in a measure atone for the sins of his contemporaries, but the musical activities of a performer die with him. If we do not listen to him while he is alive, we do not hear him at all except, perhaps, through phonograph recording.

Perhaps my overabundant store of maternal instinct had something to do with my feelings on the subject, but quite apart from personal interest in my own pupils, my varied experiences had given me a very clear picture of the graver problems of young American musicians in general. For all these reasons I decided not to resume public playing. I did not announce permanent retirement from the concert stage, nor did I give any farewell concerts. I simply retired.

Many other musicians and music patrons were thinking along the same lines with regard to young American musicians. Various



efforts were already being made to provide some sort of opportunity for them. The National Federation of Music Clubs can claim an important place in the musical development of the United States. Their meetings have always provided an outlet for the musical performance of their own amateur and professional members, while the public concert courses they have organized in many cities have introduced famous artists to their respective communities. In addition, they have for many years organized contests for young artists in which generous money prizes have been given. More recently, the Naumburg Foundation had been created through the generosity of Mr. Walter W. Naumburg, with the object of providing free debut recitals each year at the Town Hall in New York for a few (the limit was six) young American artists chosen by a competent jury in a public contest. This admirable institution is still performing its valuable function. In addition, the National Music League had been founded to provide a management for young artists who could only command a modest fee. Twenty per cent of a fifty-dollar fee does not interest the big New York manager, and the young unknown artist often had to play or sing for even less. The National Music League also succeeded in arousing the interest of a new audience by sending its young artists to places where there were no existing concert courses and by organizing concerts for the younger generation in schools.

I had studied all these developments while I was music critic, and I was thoroughly in sympathy with all of them, but I could not help feeling that one more thing remained to be done. Somebody had to knock at the gate of what Wolfsohn had called the "big field."

The only young musicians who had access to this field were

foreigners, or Americans who had won some foreign reputation and were lucky enough to have the support of influential people. I had observed that neither the money prizes of the National Federation of Music Clubs, the Naumburg debut recitals, nor the National Music League management had proved to lead to the "big field." As a rule, working up from small beginnings is healthy, but in this particular matter of a concert career I was haunted by Wolfsohn's pronouncement in my youth, "If you play around New York long enough for low fees, you will get a 'small fry' tag around your neck and that finishes you for the 'big field.' "

In general I was much influenced, in thinking the whole matter through, by my own early experiences. I was aware that times had changed, but I also knew that formidable barriers still existed for the American musician.

Custom is strong throughout human life. Just as certain coins and slips of paper become money because custom has so decreed, a presentation at Court in England furnishes an entrée to the highest circles of society, and appearing as soloist at regular symphony concerts of our major orchestras confers a special status upon the musical performer in the United States. *Many years "behind the scenes of a symphony orchestra" had taught me who was eligible and who was not eligible for these significant appearances.* Occasionally, strong personal influence might obtain such an engagement for an aspiring young artist, but as a rule symphony engagements were as inaccessible to unknown American musicians, no matter how fine they might be, as the presidency of the United States.

At the same time, if one of the New York managers chose to import a young European of the same age, even one that was an

unknown quantity to American audiences, it was quite possible to book him with all the major orchestras at fees of five hundred dollars or more. True, such a European had usually won some success in the Old World, but if the demand for that persisted, we would continue to be dominated by the old conditions which impelled Wolfsohn to insist that I should play in Europe before attempting to make a debut in America. The orchestra engagement was the symbol of the "big field."

As critic, I had witnessed dozens of dreary debut recitals in New York. With the exception of those given by the Naumburg Foundation or of concerts given by young artists who happened to be residents of greater New York and who therefore possessed a sufficiently large personal following to work up an audience with the help of relatives and friends, they were very poorly attended. Nobody bought tickets for them except when induced to by personal solicitation.

The "polytonal chain-gang" did its best to "cover" such events, but it was rarely possible for any reviewer to hear a whole program. Reviews were usually brief and noncommittal. In short, as Wolfsohn expressed it, "nothing happened." And these debut recitals cost from five to seven hundred dollars according to the amount of advertising that was done. This expensive procedure—unless the concert-giver was annihilated by the critics—had a certain value in the home town. In connection with teaching and other professional activities, "playing in New York" meant something, but the average debut recital did not lead in the direction of the "big field."

When one worries long enough about a thing, there comes a time when one must do something about it. I formulated a plan to "knock at the gate of the big field." I discussed the matter

with the wisest of my friends and the Schubert Memorial came into being.

The new venture was named by Ossip Gabrilowitsch, who was invited to become president. We were in the midst of a Schubert Centenary. Gabrilowitsch felt that Schubert's early death and lack of recognition by the world during his lifetime made him a logical patron saint for an undertaking devoted to the young and unknown artist. The idea of the whole thing was to give to a few (there never are many!) young artists of exceptional talent such a debut with orchestra in New York as Wolfsohn had declared to be my only chance to "get anywhere near the big field."

The increase in union rates had brought the expense of engaging an orchestra so high that the total cost of such a concert in 1928, including hall rental and adequate advertising, was about five thousand dollars. In order to raise funds I invited a number of my personal friends and two friendly institutions to become charter, founder or sustaining members.

Each charter member contributed one thousand dollars. The charter members were: Cornelius N. Bliss, Miss Lizzie P. Bliss, Thomas Cochran, Harry Harkness Flagler, Mrs. Harry Harkness Flagler, Mrs. Christian R. Holmes, Frederick A. Juilliard, Juilliard Musical Foundation, Otto H. Kahn, A. Atwater Kent, Walter W. Naumburg, Mrs. John S. Newberry, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Madame Olga Samaroff Stokowski, Victor Talking Machine Company, Paul M. Warburg.

Important among the officers was the Artists' Advisory Board composed of conductors who at the time of serving were directing major symphony orchestras in the United States. The original list read: Chairman, Leopold Stokowski (Philadelphia), Artur

Bodanzky (Metropolitan Opera and Friends of Music), Walter Damrosch (New York Symphony), Serge Koussevitzky (Boston), William Mengelberg (New York Philharmonic), Ernest Schelling (New York Philharmonic Children's Concerts), Frederick Stock (Chicago).

This committee was later expanded to include conductors in other cities.

I contributed an office in my apartment and the reader may guess, from the secretaryship I undertook, that I was prepared to do a large share of the "dirty work."

From the beginning, however, I had an indefatigable and most resourceful partner in Mrs. Ernest Hutcheson, who had been a close friend since my student days in Berlin. Quietly and without ever demanding any reward for it, Mrs. Hutcheson had long been doing a wonderful piece of voluntary humanitarian work at the Juilliard Graduate School. She had an office there to which all the students could go when they needed advice or assistance. There were few students in the school that had not at one time or another been helped over rough places by her wisdom and generosity.

In the course of this activity and the experience provided by her husband's teaching Mrs. Hutcheson had come to the same conclusions which impelled me to found the Schubert Memorial. After much discussion it was decided to organize two concerts during the winter 1928-29, for which the organization would choose the artists. In later years they would be chosen in public contests.

There was no time to organize a nation-wide contest for the season 1928-29. Sad experience later taught us that it would have been wiser to wait, and hold a contest for the first concerts, but

everything was set and we were impatient to begin. Also we were very anxious to start off with young artists we had known long enough to enable us to feel very sure they were fitted for the ordeal by nature, and by the development of their gifts.

We chose Muriel Kerr, a pupil of Ernest Hutcheson's who is conclusively proving today, as a successful concert pianist under Judson's management, that she was worthy of the opportunity; Sadah Schuhari, a highly gifted violin pupil of Paul Kochanski; Graham Harris, a young conductor, vouched for by our president, Ossip Gabrilowitsch; and Donatella Prentisi, a soprano, pupil of Marcella Sembrich. Two were to appear at each concert: Muriel Kerr and Sadah Schuhari at the first, and Prentisi and Harris at the second.

Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss organized a New York committee for the sale of tickets. We hoped to sell enough tickets to defray part of the expenses so that the concerts would not make too great an inroad upon the fund established through charter memberships.

To our own profound amazement, Carnegie Hall was completely sold out for both concerts. Mrs. Bliss had a committee composed of women who were experienced in philanthropical undertakings. Under her leadership they were irresistible and, as Lawrence Gilman wrote the morning after the first concert, "the audience assembled last night in Carnegie Hall was worthy of the *première* of *Tristan*."

In preparation for the events we found generous co-operation on all sides. Arnold Genthe, one of New York's leading camera artists, photographed our young musicians for the program books. Mr. and Mrs. Myron C. Taylor had Sadah Schuhari play at their house, and an interested group among those who heard her bought her a beautiful Guadagnini violin from Hill's in London. In the

midst of all the excitement, Prentisi became ill. The second concert was to follow close upon the first. I had a pupil, Isabelle Yalkovsky, who was one of the stars of the Juilliard Graduate School at the time. She had been considered as a possible candidate when the programs were first discussed, but I had felt that it would be wiser not to have one of my own pupils appear at the opening concerts. She was young, and I preferred to wait until public contests were organized in which—if she won—she would be chosen by a jury. When we had to choose someone to replace Prentisi at short notice, however, I was urged to let Yalkovsky play. The argument that finally caused me to consent was: "Have you the right to rob this girl of a great opportunity just because she has studied with you?" It seemed impossible to do this. It also seemed impossible that anyone could mistake my motives in connection with the Schubert Memorial. I had founded it but I had refused the presidency. I had given all I could in time, effort and money, but if my motive had been to win glory as a teacher, it is conceivable that I would have expended all this upon the direct exploitation of my own pupils without bothering about others.

I expected some criticism, but I was unprepared for the storm that broke loose after the first concert. If I had murdered my grandmother and strangled my child, I could not have been more bitterly attacked than I was in certain quarters. The music critic Mr. Richard Stokes wrote in his review of our first concert of the "slaughter of musical innocents to make a Samaroffian holiday." Worst of all, our youngsters had poor reviews in all the papers. Everything we had done to try to make the concerts a success was in vain. We had the New York Philharmonic Orchestra with Bodanzky (who gave his services) conducting,

and the brilliant audience was genuinely enthusiastic over the fine playing of the young artists. De Koos, a leading European manager who was in my own box, said after Muriel Kerr played that he would like to book concerts for her at once in Europe. He felt sure she would succeed. We went to bed happy. We woke up to find New York papers strewn with the wreckage of our hopes, and a great many people who had been enthusiastic at the concert changed their minds when they read the reviews.

The New York critics were not the only ones who disapproved of us. I was told by many conservative people, who had never had a struggle in their lives, that it was all wrong to give young people "so much help that they did not have to struggle." These good people did not realize that there is no struggle in the world like striving to make good in a great opportunity. I had myself been through the kind of struggle that awaited our young Schubert Memorial artists and I knew what it meant.

The difference between the struggle to *obtain* opportunity and the struggle to *make good* in a great opportunity is that the former necessitates currying favor with people who are able to provide money or exercise influence, whereas the latter calls upon all the artistic possibilities and capacity for work of the young artist. Of the two the struggle to make good is surely the more developing, while the struggle to obtain opportunity is often humanly degrading.

After the first concert we wrote a letter to Yalkovsky and Harris, offering to release them from any obligation to appear at the second concert. We pointed out that as the press was obviously hostile, the appearance might do them more harm than good. They both answered that they would not dream of withdrawing. At the second concert there was a sold-out house and



enthusiasm at the performance, but the press reviews were again poor.

I then begged to resign from the Schubert Memorial. Many people believed that my criticism of critics in the *Evening Post* had something to do with the obvious hostility of the New York press. This may be true in the case of some individuals but I cannot believe that men like Lawrence Gilman or Olin Downes would take out a grudge against me (if they had one) on innocent youngsters. They simply did not like the Schubert Memorial.

The officers of the Schubert Memorial would not hear of my resigning, so I rolled up my sleeves and began to work for the future of the undertaking, and particularly of the young artists we had already presented. During this time of storm and stress, Mrs. Hutcheson's wisdom was invaluable. When I waxed indignant and was ready to kill somebody who had attacked our young artists, she could always smooth me down. The process came to be known in the language of the Hutcheson family as "sitting on Olga's coat-tails." She prevented me from doing many a rash and impulsive thing.

I finally decided that the best thing I could do for the youngsters was to organize committees in other cities for the purpose of giving Schubert Memorial concerts and engaging our young artists. Between teaching days at the Juilliard and the Philadelphia Conservatory I made quick journeys to Boston, Providence, Philadelphia, Baltimore and many other cities that were within reach, and organized committees wherever I went. Whatever else my life may have lacked, it has been singularly blessed in the matter of friends. Their support and help in connection with the Schubert Memorial has my undying gratitude. Mrs. John

Garrett in Baltimore, Mrs. Randal Morgan in Philadelphia, Mrs. Alexander Steinert in Boston and Miss Dorothy Sturges in Providence were among the pioneers in a rapidly growing extension department headed in New York by Mrs. Gilbert H. Montague. A minimum fee of two hundred dollars a concert was assured to Schubert Memorial artists, and it was easy enough for the committee to sell a sufficient number of tickets to pay it. Psychologically it was designed to get beyond the "small fry" level. The concerts outside of New York were not given with orchestra. Sometimes they were even given in private houses, but there was always an interested audience that attached importance to the artists and paid for tickets.

One curious thing happened. *The critics in other cities lavished praise upon the Schubert Memorial artists.* It is significant that these reviewers were not in the least influenced by New York and that their verdict was quite different. In my youth the press throughout the country usually reflected New York pronouncements. One met the ghosts of New York press reviews in most other cities. The reviews of Kerr, Schuhari and Yalkovsky outside of New York left nothing to be desired. They were brilliantly favorable wherever these young artists appeared.

There was little we could do for Graham Harris after his New York appearance, and we were eventually forced to abandon the attempt to help conductors. As Judson has said, "The conductor needs a million-dollar instrument." Without an orchestra nothing can be done for him, and the expense of engaging orchestras for appearances in other cities under the auspices of our extension committee was prohibitive.

While extension committees were being organized I made a

desperate effort to obtain orchestral engagements for our young artists. The first conductor I approached was our president, Ossip Gabrilowitsch. At that time he directed the Detroit Orchestra and also appeared as guest conductor during part of the season in Philadelphia. He and his wife were among my most intimate friends and often lunched or dined with me when they were in New York. It was while Gabrilowitsch was fulfilling an engagement in Philadelphia that I asked him to dine in New York on a Sunday evening and discuss Schubert Memorial affairs. I made my report about new committees and then told him I felt that nothing would help matters along so well as some orchestral engagements for our young artists. I asked him if he would be willing to have them appear with the Detroit Orchestra.

"I would be very glad to have them play at a Sunday popular concert," he replied. "Of course, you know the orchestra situation well enough to know it is impossible to engage them for a pair of symphony concerts."

"Why?" I asked. "You know they could give fine performances. You have often engaged young Europeans you had never heard. Why not engage these youngsters when you know they are good enough?"

"Because the committee and manager would not consent," he replied.

We argued back and forth from eight P.M. to midnight. If I had ever doubted the existence of the barrier between the young American artist and the "big field," this conversation would have proved its indisputable reality. Here was Gabrilowitsch, president of the Schubert Memorial, an idealist if there ever was one, a good personal friend and a musician convinced of the worth

of our young artists, and yet he felt that the barrier between them and "a regular pair of symphony concerts" could not be removed.

An appearance at a Sunday popular concert meant nothing from the point of view of prestige. Those programs had long been open to local soloists and unknown artists. I was hammering at a national psychology. Neither Gabrilowitsch nor I gave way and our parting was distinctly cool.

After he left I wrote him a nasty letter. Before receiving it he sent me a telegram stating that he had decided to engage Yalkovsky and Schuhari to play the Chausson Concerto for Piano, Violin and String Orchestra at a regular pair of Detroit Symphony Orchestra concerts! I would have given worlds to recall my letter! Luckily Gabrilowitsch saw the funny side of the affair and said he would frame it just to remind himself how fierce I could be.

Fortified with the precedent of the Detroit Orchestra, I attacked other conductors and soon had a respectable number of orchestral engagements for the young Schubert Memorialists.

One day John Erskine asked me to undertake the Juilliard Extension examinations. This extension work has since been abandoned, but at that time the Juilliard Foundation sent a traveling musical judge to cities throughout the country to hold auditions and award scholarships for study with local teachers or schools to the most talented among the contestants. I knew that this tour would take me to the Pacific coast and back. Visions of the possibility of organizing Schubert Memorial committees at the same time had a great deal to do with my undertaking the task.

At that time the corresponding secretary of the Schubert Memorial was Barnett Byman, the husband of Isabelle Yalkovsky.

She had married him when she was sixteen and he had left a promising business in Chicago in order to be with her in New York. Never has any organization had such secretarial work! Barnett Byman paid not the slightest attention to time limitations. He arrived at unearthly hours in the morning and had to be forcibly ejected in the late evening. He arranged a Schubert Memorial meeting in every city of my Juilliard tour. Where I did not have personal friends or acquaintances, letters of introduction were procured from somebody. Between the Juilliard auditions and the Schubert Memorial meetings, with all they brought in the shape of private interviews and public speeches, my journey to the coast and back almost landed me in my grave. As I traveled homeward, I was addressing a group of prominent Denver citizens (who later formed a most successful committee) when all of a sudden I found myself moving my lips without producing any sound. I had complete voice extinction from sheer fatigue.

By the time I reached New York we had committees all over the country, and preparations were well under way for our first nation-wide contest. Meanwhile we corresponded with the entire United States. Everybody who could play or sing—or thought they could—wrote us a letter requiring an answer. Mrs. Hutcheson, Mrs. Montague and I worked for days over printed matter which was designed to put forth all the aims of the Schubert Memorial and the conditions of the contest. Notwithstanding our labors there was always something our correspondents had not understood and we had to write a letter about it. This state of affairs lasted for four years. Each year we held nation-wide contests and gave our concerts.

Meanwhile disturbing things began to happen in our extension department. Mrs. John Garrett's husband was appointed

United States Ambassador to Italy. That meant finding another chairman for Baltimore. Another important sponsor had a baby and had to drop out for a year. One of our most valued chairmen died. These acts of God complicated matters considerably, and while I was quite willing to go on working just the same, I realized that the whole thing rested too much on a personal basis. It had grown to be too important for that.

The president of the National Federation of Music Clubs at that time was Mrs. Ruth Haller Ottaway, a woman of exceptional vision and ability. I had been strongly attracted to her ever since we had first met. We spoke the same language. Gradually she, Mrs. Hutcheson and I worked out a plan whereby the Schubert Memorial and the National Federation of Music Clubs might join forces in creating opportunities for young American artists. The Federation, extending all over the country, had a membership of nearly half a million as well as a splendid existing contest organization. The prestige and unique character of the Schubert Memorial Award had triumphed over all opposition and was strong enough to make the Federation feel it was worth while to go into partnership. This affiliation was a great step forward.

Two years later I induced the Philadelphia Orchestra to give the award its highest distinction by introducing Schubert Memorial winners as soloists at its regular symphony concerts in Philadelphia and New York. Thereafter we no longer needed to give our own concerts.

The contests are now held biennially and are so arranged that the musical aspirant must first enter and win a state contest organized by the National Federation of Music Clubs. The winner of the state contest is then sent to a district contest, also organized by the Federation. The district comprises several states whose

winners compete for the privilege of being sent to the national contest. Here the district winners from all over the country compete for the generous money prizes offered by the National Federation of Music Clubs. Only the national winners may then compete for the Schubert Memorial award of an appearance at concerts of the Philadelphia Orchestra in Philadelphia and New York.

The affiliation with the Philadelphia Orchestra would never have been possible without the understanding co-operation of Curtis Bok, then its president, and Leopold Stokowski. Curtis Bok, true to the tradition of his family, is an understanding lover of the arts and a public-spirited citizen. He grasped the significance of what we were trying to do and gave us his whole-hearted support. So did Leopold Stokowski.

I never acted as judge in any of the contests and gradually managed to withdraw from all active work in the Schubert Memorial. I did this for the sake of my piano pupils. I was not one whit less interested in the Schubert Memorial, but it was a serious handicap to my piano pupils for me to be in a position that enabled anybody to question the propriety of their entering the contests.

It was most interesting to me to stand on the side and watch my gifted pupil, Rosalyn Tureck, the first of my musical brood to enter a Schubert Memorial contest since Yalkovsky's debut in the first year, win the much-coveted award. Tureck entered the contest in 1935, seven years after I founded the Schubert Memorial. To me it was like watching a horse one has brought up win race after race, and I never realized so clearly what a stiff ordeal it was. Those who fear we are eliminating struggle from the paths of the young need not worry. Our contest conditions demand three concertos and a solo concert program. The judges

may ask for anything on this long list. In addition there are certain required pieces which all contestants must perform. The required numbers are performed behind a screen so that the judges may compare purely musical values without being influenced by personality or any other consideration. Many of the finest musicians in the world, both foreign and American, have given their services as judges at these contests.

Rosalyn Tureck entered the New York state contest which was rendered exciting by a number of gifted Juilliard competitors. After winning that she entered the district contest, which included Pennsylvania and the competition of a Curtis Institute state winner. Again she won, and entered the national contest which was held that year in Philadelphia.

Excitement grew as the final contest approached. The national contest is held at the same time as the biennial convention of the National Federation of Music Clubs. Delegates from all over the country attend the convention and take the liveliest interest in the contests.

Rosalyn Tureck and Joseph Knitzer, a gifted violinist, were given the Schubert Memorial award after they had each won a thousand-dollar prize of the National Federation of Music Clubs.

Mrs. Agnes Jardine had succeeded Mrs. Ottaway as president, and took the greatest interest in the contest. As soon as the decision was reached, the winners were whisked away to a broadcasting station from which the announcement of the award was made over a nation-wide hook-up, and each winner played a solo. Hearts beat fast that night.

Best of all, the big managers have begun to take on the Schubert Memorial winners. Hansel and Jones became the managers of our winner, Dalies Frantz. After her successful debut with the



Philadelphia Orchestra in Philadelphia and New York, Rosalyn Tureck was offered a contract by Charles Wagner, who is noted for his policy of undertaking only "headliners."

Much as I rejoice in the growing success of Schubert Memorial artists, I am still more thrilled by the conviction that our knock at the gate of the "big field" has benefited not only the winners of the Schubert Memorial award, but all young American artists of exceptional talent. It would be absurd to claim that the Schubert Memorial is alone responsible for an indisputable change in the psychology of managers, orchestras and critics towards young American artists, but I believe it was at least an important contributing cause.

Incidentally, it is significant that while I took a Russian stage name in 1905 at the behest of the leading New York manager, a recent winner of the Metropolitan Opera auditions of the air, the talented baritone known to the Greenwich Music School where he studied as Warenoff, changed his Russian name to *Warren* for his budding operatic career! These facts tell a significant story, and a welcome one. Eugene List never went into a Schubert Memorial contest, but after his successful debut, Judson was able to book him at respectably high fees for appearances at regular symphony concerts of most of the major orchestras in the United States. When I think of my famous fight with Gabilowitsch in 1929, I realize what that means.

As I write, preparations are going forward for the contest of 1939. Eugene Ormandy, conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, has become president of the Schubert Memorial; Mrs. Hutcheson is chairman of the board of directors; Mrs. Ottaway has succeeded me as secretary; and our treasurer, Mr. Cornelius N. Bliss, has very little to do, for the Schubert Memorial is prob-

ably the only successful musical organization on earth that functions without any necessity to raise money or spend it.

Undoubtedly many a talented youngster is working hard at his repertory for the coming contest. One of them wrote in his letter of application, "Whether I win or not, it is good to know there is a door open somewhere."

# 13

## CREATING AUDIENCES OF ACTIVE LISTENERS

---

MISS LILY BLISS was one of the people I have most admired in New York. From the moment I first met her until the happy weeks she spent with me in Seal Harbor shortly before her death, I never ceased to marvel at the quiet and unobtrusive way in which she managed to be of great service to the arts without ever seeking the limelight for herself. She really loved beautiful things and expressed this love in service.

During her visit in Seal Harbor she and my summer neighbor, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., were engrossed in plans for the new Museum of Modern Art in New York. They were largely responsible for its then projected existence, and I took the greatest interest in their discussions. It was Miss Bliss's final contribution to the cause of art in the United States, and the Museum now houses her fine collection of modern paintings.

In view of all she had done for the arts it was not surprising that on the rare occasions when she expressed a wish, an affirmative response from her artist friends was a foregone conclusion. One fateful afternoon some years previously, she had come to see

me and had asked whether I would be willing to undertake the musical education of her niece, Betty Bliss.

Betty was then eighteen, and lovely to look upon. She had a passion for hunting, and her social and outdoor life precluded the possibility of piano practice. Her aunt, however, wished her to have *music* lessons, because her father loved music and it would be so pleasant if she were able to enjoy it with him.

"And how do you propose I should teach her?" I inquired in some consternation. "After all, dear Lily, I am a pianist, and I have only taught my own instrument . . ."

I was still writing for the *Evening Post* at the time and an additional activity was none too welcome.

"Give her information along the lines of your weekly *Evening Post* articles," Miss Bliss replied. "She enjoys reading them. That is what gave me the idea of bringing her to you."

I finally agreed to begin Betty's musical education the following week. Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Bliss, parents of my new pupil, came to the first lesson. I never knew whether they had to bring young Betty (who looked somewhat rebellious) by main force or whether they were merely curious. In any case, they continued to come throughout the winter. We had some delightful hours together. I engaged Juilliard students to illustrate my lectures—for that is what the lessons became. I was glad to be able to give the youngsters some financially profitable work to do, and through these contacts the Blissés became so interested in young artists that they were both willing, a year later, to take a very active part in the Schubert Memorial.

I was, however, groping in the dark for some really systematic way of doing this kind of teaching. Dimly I began to perceive a wonderful possibility in the development of active listeners. I

knew that the future of music demanded the creation of much larger and more interested audiences. This was obvious, for the supply of composers and performers already exceeded the demand for them, but I had never considered the development of the listener as something that could come within the scope of my educational activities in music.

Many were the people who had said, "It is a shame the Juilliard and the Curtis are educating so many musicians! There is no room for them. These schools ought to be stopped!" If there had been plenty of opportunity in other fields, there might have been something to say for this point of view, but inasmuch as every walk of life seemed to present the same problem of congestion and potential unemployment, I felt it would be more constructive to work at an increase in audiences rather than refuse education to gifted potential performers. Owing to this conviction, work on the Schubert Memorial project and the Layman's Music Courses later became inseparably bound up in my mind. They complemented each other.

For two years I haunted so-called music appreciation courses and read all the books I could find on the subject of listening to music. In the course of these investigations I found much that was admirable in the way of stimulation of interest, but it seemed to me that some way might be devised whereby listening could be made more of a real musical activity. The pedagogical problem fascinated me. When I asked John Erskine whether he would permit me to hold some experimental classes at the Juilliard Graduate School, his reply was: "Do anything you like." It was fortunate that the Juilliard Foundation had a president of John Erskine's peculiar gifts during some of its most important formative years. He was himself a musician, and therefore understood

what the artist-teachers were trying to do. Being a gifted writer, he had a vivid imagination and a spice of the spirit of adventure that is characteristic of creative people. At the same time he was a good business man. The combination was most favorable.

I wanted to hold the experimental classes at the Juilliard because I felt it would be easier for potential future teachers to participate in them at the school. From the beginning I had two main objectives: first, to learn what I wanted to know from the layman listener himself; second, to have assistants who would work through experimental stages with me, because I knew that if we stumbled upon anything of potential value it would delay the usefulness of the ideas if only one teacher had acquired a technique.

Our first subject to work upon was my long-suffering secretary, Barnett Byman. We called him "the guinea pig." He was very patient and uncompromisingly honest when we failed to achieve results. He never gave us any false encouragement, but he learned so quickly that we came to the conclusion his ear was too good to be completely enlightening. We wanted to get our teeth into more difficult problems; therefore we set about combing the city of New York for poor ears. If we heard of anybody who was tone deaf, we were like a pack of hounds on the trail. One day it occurred to me that there was a marvelous potential guinea pig in my immediate circle of personal friends.

After the death of Frederick Steinway his nephew, Theodore Steinway, had become president of the famous firm of piano manufacturers. The charming wife of the new president had always attracted me. Just as I had envied Schumann-Heink her numerous offspring, so I reveled in the atmosphere of the Theodore Steinway home where children of all ages radiated happiness

and jollity. Mrs. Theodore, who possessed a rare combination of gayety and serenity, presided over this lively household in a bewitching manner. Apparently she never worried. Everything she did seemed easy and natural, except for one duty in life: Mrs. Theodore had to go to a great many concerts and operas. Her husband's position threw her into the midst of musical affairs and she was said to be hopelessly unmusical. I recently found a letter to my grandmother dated October 25, 1930, in which my determination to capture Ruth Steinway as a guinea pig is resolutely expressed. I quote the paragraph:

The experimental classes at the Juilliard about which I have written you several times become more and more interesting. We have several new guinea pigs from the Junior League and I am now on the trail of one that promises to be a prize, namely, Mrs. Theodore Steinway. When I told Julia Steinway (Mrs. Frederick) that I had this in mind she replied, "Olga, you will meet your Waterloo there. You will never make Ruth Steinway hear music. She is tone deaf."

When we tried Mrs. Theodore Steinway's ear, it almost seemed as though her frank relative had been right about her lack of native ability to hear music. When we played middle C twice in succession on the piano she was not sure whether we had played two different tones or the same one. She could scarcely distinguish whether a scale ascended or descended. In short, she was a gloriously valuable guinea pig. She became intensely interested and allowed my enthusiastic assistants to try their growing skill upon her to an extent that seems incredible considering the many demands of her large family. She gave unsparingly of her time. This is not the place to attempt a description of the pedagogy we developed in the experimental stages of what was eventually

incorporated as "The Layman's Music Courses," \* but an outline of the growth of our undertaking points to the importance of listening in modern musical life.

As the news of our experimental classes spread in the Juilliard Graduate School, more and more of the fellowship holders enrolled. Some of my own piano students worked with me, but many came from other classes. Among these was a blond young girl from Minnesota, Harriet Johnson, who held a fellowship in Rubin Goldmark's composition class. Her compositions, which I had heard in school concerts, had interested me, and I soon saw that she had a pronounced gift for the kind of work we were trying to do. Now that she is director of the Layman's Music Courses and making a brilliant career in this type of work, we often laugh over comical things that happened in the experimental stages. In the Juilliard classes, the student-teachers had to try their hand at lecturing to the guinea pigs, and it was often amusing to see how helpless some brilliant violinist or pianist could be when he tried to stand up and speak.

One day a youth of ardent temperament had undertaken a lecture on the nature of musical sound. When I arrived at the school, Joe, the elevator man, said to me, "Madam, would you mind telling me what is going on in your class today? I have been taking strange things up to your classroom!"

The lecture began with the ominous words, "From the cradle to the grave the ear of man is bombarded by sound." The lecturer then proceeded to explain the nature of the bombardment in such detail that when I stopped him at the end of an hour, he said pathetically, "But I am only just beginning." For weeks he had haunted the sound-laboratories of Columbia University and other

\* The author's *The Layman's Music Book* deals with this subject.



institutions of learning. He had managed to borrow every conceivable kind of apparatus for scientific sound experiments, including an enormous plaster cast of the human ear, which had greatly mystified the elevator man. After the lecture the exhausted guinea pigs anxiously inquired whether it would be necessary for them to know and remember all they had just heard. If I had not been able to reassure them, I fear there would have been an exodus of guinea pigs from the classes.

Gradually we learned what the layman most needs in order to become an active listener and how to give it to him.

I know of no more difficult type of music teaching. To talk about musical history in terms of composers and periods requires sufficient reading and research plus command of language, but musical scholars can easily find in existing books of reference all the material they need for use in such lectures.

Sometimes when my student-teachers have presented in their lectures a somewhat undigested mass of material culled from well-known books of reference, I have amused myself by giving them chapter and verse of the volumes they were paraphrasing. I knew them well from my own preparation for lecture work.

Another way of approaching music appreciation is to try to arouse interest in music through association of ideas. Up to a certain point this method can be effective, but after you have aroused the listener's interest in one piece of music by such means, what about the next piece? Most lectures on musical subjects might be classed as informative entertainment. As such they have distinct value as a stimulation of interest in the art, but the Layman's Music Courses are different in aim and substance. They teach music itself.

In none of my varied activities have I felt myself to be so

completely an instrument of destiny as in the Layman's Music Courses work. In the expansion that has occurred, it was as though some prearranged plan unfolded itself. The right thing happened at the right time. The right person was always at hand. The work itself provided endless problems, but we encountered no obstacles so far as expansion was concerned.

A demonstration at the Institute of Musical Art marked the end of our experimental era. On this occasion Mrs. Theodore Steinway distinguished herself by giving proof of such extraordinary musicianship that nobody who witnessed what she did could possibly doubt the reality and the value of active listening. An audience composed of Mrs. Steinways would be an artist's idea of heaven. Theodore Steinway inquired mournfully one night, "Do you know what you have done to me? *I* have to stay at home with a sick child because my once unmusical wife cannot bear to miss the B Minor Mass of Bach!"

On the list of particularly interesting Layman's Music Course pupils and patrons are Mr. Paul D. Cravath, chairman of the board of the Metropolitan Opera Company, and Mr. Marshall Field, president of the New York Philharmonic. Both these important supporters of music had always enjoyed the art, but they wanted to understand it better.

At first, Mr. Cravath came alone, but gradually he gathered a class of friends about him and the group still meets once a week at my apartment. Next winter will be their sixth successive season. Each year they choose as a study project the exploration of some particular type of music. As an example, one winter when Toscanini conducted a series of Brahms concerts for the New York Philharmonic, the Cravath group seriously studied all the compositions on these programs. With the help of scores and records the

most interested members of the class did "home work." Mr. Cravath's daughter, Mrs. William Francis Gibbs, knew her Brahms themes as well as she knew the characters in *Hamlet*. When the concerts took place Mr. Cravath procured enough boxes to accommodate the members of the class with their respective husbands and wives. The group dined together before the concerts, and after hearing the performances with the complete enjoyment which only real familiarity with great music can give, there were lively discussions. An outsider listening to these conversations would certainly have assumed that the speakers were active musicians. As I witnessed this, it seemed to me that it was the twentieth-century equivalent of a group of people who in former ages might have met to play chamber music in order to learn to know musical masterpieces. The difference was that Toscanini gave a more perfect experience of the Brahms music than any group of amateurs could gain through their own performances.

I know that this point of view is hotly contested. As the destiny of music unfolds itself many musicians fear the change that has come in the approach of the average human being to music. The modern child has grown impatient of the old method of studying music. Or is it that the child always was impatient but in former times yielded with more docility to parental demands?

My own child came to me one day when she was eight years of age and announced with grave determination, "Mummy, I want to stop music lessons." She had always displayed a natural aptitude for music. Her sense of rhythm was excellent and she had absolute pitch. Encouraged by these hopeful qualifications, I had given her solfège followed by piano lessons. She was struggling with a piece by Bach at the time of our conversation. When

I asked why she wished to stop piano lessons, she said: "I have heard good piano-playing all my life. I don't want to play badly and I shall never work enough to play well."

Her reason contained such irrefutable logic that I did not attempt coercion. Her point of view gave me much food for thought. I remembered my grandmother's wise decision that I should spend my time on modern languages instead of Latin and Greek. If we regard education as a preparation for life, is it logical to spend a great amount of time on things we shall obviously never use? This is a serious question for educators in modern life when every minute counts. Obviously, in the field of reading it would be absurd to limit ourselves to a utilitarian plan. Certain things belonging to general culture are needed in our education, whether we actually use them in later life or not. But playing a musical instrument is a highly specialized activity. It can only take a real and lasting place in general musical culture *if it is combined with an experience that extends far beyond the manual labor that once formed such a great part of the old type of musical education.*

In spite of all the work I have done in developing active listeners, I should never advocate abandoning the study of singing or playing some instrument. But there are two things we should avoid. One is the type of music study which is 80 per cent manual labor, leading to negligible results that are out of all proportion to the time, effort and money expended on them. The other is the psychology fostered by so many well-meaning musicians that a poor performance is better than none and should therefore be considered a good thing.

If I had not gone through the experience of the Layman's Music Course work, I should undoubtedly have continued to cherish this psychology myself. It was the accepted thing in my

youth. But since I have given the matter so much thought and discovered through actual experience what a rich and satisfying musical life the layman can have without the element of bad performance, I can no longer join the lugubrious chorus of lament that bemoans the passing of *Hausmusik*.

To begin with, *Hausmusik* need not pass. Nothing prevents those who are inclined to make music from doing so. What has really passed is a willingness to endure poor performance. It is the listener who has become impatient of such a procedure because he can hear something better at any time through the medium of phonograph records or radio broadcasts. I was very conscious of this one night at Haus Hirth. Johanna and Walther Hirth had invited an amateur string quartet from Garmisch for an evening of "real old-fashioned *Hausmusik*." They were evidently a bit worried lest I should be overcritical, and I think they secretly hoped I would go to bed. But I felt it was a good chance to test my convictions. Perhaps in Germany, the mother-country of *Hausmusik*, I would find that I was mistaken in my attitude towards amateur performance.

The estimable gentlemen who composed the quartet belonged to various walks of life, and despite excruciating lapses of intonation in the opening Haydn quartet, I found it easy enough to summon admiration for the fact that they had sufficient enthusiasm to make them give so much of their spare time to music. As the mistakes increased, however, one fatal thought took possession of me and formed the lasting impression of the evening. It was the question: "What would these cultivated Germans who are so quietly listening to grotesque and inaccurate distortions of the music of Haydn and Mozart do, if somebody passed an evening reading their Goethe and Schiller aloud in the same manner?"

No other creations of human genius have ever been treated as musical masterpieces have been treated. Bungling attempts at painting, sculpture or writing can do no harm. They do not ruin an art work created by somebody else. But the old idea of musical performance as an "accomplishment" destined to be admired upon social occasions has been responsible for some pretty terrible vandalism.

I remember a wicked remark of Harriet Lanier's at a fashionable party in New York where a frightful two-piano performance of Debussy's *Afternoon of a Faun* had been perpetrated by two otherwise charming amateurs. Mrs. Lanier whispered to me, as she fled, "Anybody can see those ladies never passed an afternoon with a faun." It was pathetic to think, however, how many afternoons—and mornings, too—they must have spent at the piano with nothing to show for it but a musical result that could scarcely fail to arouse ridicule. Would it not be better to listen to the wonderful record the Philadelphia Orchestra has made of this piece? Even if the sound of a record is acoustically imperfect it is much nearer to the art work, as Debussy created it, than a bungled performance on instruments for which the music was never intended.

Parents who have been in our Layman's Music Courses are demanding something different for their children, and I am striving to evolve a type of private lesson which will include some piano work and some cultural musical experience that will extend beyond the possibilities of ten stiff fingers and limited time for practice.

This type of study may not lead to many of the bad performances so vigorously championed by the advocates of amateur performance at any price. The taste of children educated in this

way will be too finely developed to permit of their finding enjoyment in a bad performance. They will only do what they can do well at the piano, but they will have a musical life rich in the experiences that carry us mortals far beyond the imperfect and often material plan of everyday existence. If I had known eight years ago as much about teaching the layman as I do today, my own child would have had that kind of development and I am sure if she had she would never have asked me to "stop music lessons."

The best thing about the expansion of the Layman's Music Courses has been the natural way in which it took place.

The first demand for classes came from the New York Junior League, for the simple reason that some of its members had been volunteer "guinea pigs" in our experimental classes. And that particular cause is responsible for our entire expansion. New classes, even those in other cities, can always be traced to some enthusiast who has taken the Layman's Music Courses.

We held classes in a studio donated by Steinway & Sons in Steinway Hall as well as at the Junior League, until we were offered a permanent home in the David Mannes Music School in New York. David and Clara Mannes, both gifted and experienced as artists and as educators, clearly perceived the possibilities of the Layman's Music Courses and offered us ideal quarters for our work. The Juilliard Foundation gave us a grant of two thousand dollars for a Capehart phonograph and an extension of our slide and record collections.

The experiments we made with slides would fill a volume. We found that visual impressions helped enormously in clarifying the technicalities of music for the layman. We do not avoid technicalities. We try to make them interesting. It always amuses

me to watch the way many lecturers on music apologize for any allusion to something "technical." A listener needs certain technicalities just as much as a performer or a composer, and they no more interfere with the normal functioning of his emotions than the technical ability of an instrumentalist, singer or composer.

The technique of the listener consists of a power of recognition combined with understanding that functions just as subconsciously, once it is properly developed, as the virtuosity of a performer. There are doubtless many laymen students who have left our classes without acquiring this technique. In any type of teaching, results vary widely according to the aptitude of students and the amount of time and effort they are willing to give, but our best laymen students definitely prove what can be done.

My only brother and his wife were spending the winter with me while we were in the midst of evolving our extensive slide collection. My brother is an architect by profession, and photography has always been one of his hobbies. In his student days at Columbia University he had helped with slides in the lecture room; therefore he was, of course, immediately pressed into service. He and Barnett Byman gave us invaluable assistance in our experiments with slides. During his experience as a guinea pig, Barnett Byman had developed a special gift for writing out music. His notation is a model of clarity and symmetry. We now have a collection of more than four hundred slides, many of which are in constant use, but I am sure more than twice that number were designed and discarded before we found exactly what we needed. Harriet Johnson is still designing new slides for use in the ear-training department of our work, which is her special province.

In the past two years more and more schools have come into



the picture of Layman's Music Course activities. The Visitation Convent in Georgetown (Washington, D.C.) was the first to become interested, through Mrs. Charles Mitchell of New York who had visited our classes. The venture there was successful and resulted in the engagement of Layman's Music Course teachers in the near-by Foxcroft School and Mt. Vernon Seminary. Harriet Johnson supervises the whole music department at Foxcroft and has built it around the Layman's Music Courses. By that I mean that these classes in active listening provide a central cultural experience for all the students, while those who are so inclined add choral singing or the study of an instrument to their musical activities. The one stimulates the other.

The officers of the Layman's Music Courses, with the exception of Harriet Johnson who has succeeded me as musical director, are all former layman students whose enthusiasm rests on the solid foundation of the benefits they have themselves received. Mrs. Theodore Steinway is the president, Mrs. William Francis Gibbs is chairman of the board of directors, Mrs. John Hopkinson Baker, one of our most accomplished "guinea pigs," is executive director.

As in the case of the Schubert Memorial I have, to a great extent, withdrawn from active service. I no longer give the actual Layman's Music Courses myself because it is not at all necessary that I should. The brilliant ability and thorough equipment of the younger teachers renders it superfluous. I often open courses in new places, and the demand for miscellaneous lectures on music is constantly increasing.

Nothing gives me more pleasure than to stand aside and watch the realization of my two dreams of service to music, the Schubert Memorial and the Layman's Music Courses. My pen and tongue are always at their disposal, but the fact that they can thrive with-

out my constant and active participation gives me the feeling that their service to music may have a lasting value.

Two years ago, one of those people who believe that music is "only emotional" and is in some mysterious way damaged by being understood, had frankly stated that my Layman's Music Courses "might be all right for some people" but were not needed by her as she "had listened to music all her life and enjoyed it." Why should she "do anything more"? I did not argue with her. Her enjoyment was her own affair and I am not in the least interested in imposing my ideas upon other people. Five minutes later, however, I heard the lady say to her neighbor at luncheon: "Have you seen the new Planetarium? You simply must go. Here I have been looking at the heavens all my life and never really knew anything about all the wonders. . . ."

At this point, I could not resist asking whether she might not admit the possibility of having failed to perceive some of the wonders of the great art of music in spite of having listened to it all her life. That day I coined the word "Musicarium" for use in *The Magic World of Music*, a book on music for children—or rather "for the young of all ages" according to its sub-title devised by my friend, Sir William McClure—which I was writing at the time.

Layman's Music Course work brought with it the publication of three of my books. I simply wrote them because we needed them. The first one, *The Layman's Music Book*, serves as a sort of textbook for our Layman's Music Courses. Our teachers go far beyond its contents, but it serves to remind the layman of the things he should remember.

*The Magic World of Music*, which is now being used in many schools, is built around a fairy-tale that cried out for illustrations.

The great artist, Emil Preetorius, is a brother of my friend Johanna Hirth, and I succeeded in persuading him to undertake the illustrations. As he could not speak a word of English, he could not read the book he was to illustrate. I had to give him the essentials verbally while walking about the forests near the Festival Theatre in Bayreuth where he had designed the scenery for some new productions. It had been very difficult to induce Preetorius to illustrate *The Magic World of Music*. He had made a great success of book illustrations in the earlier part of his career, but since he had become head of the art school connected with the University of Munich, as well as the most sought-after scenic designer in Europe, he had little time left for anything else. At the time I asked him to illustrate *The Magic World of Music* he was terribly overworked. In addition to all his activities in Germany, he had contracted to design the scenery for the coronation season at Covent Garden in London, for a new production of *Tristan* at the Paris Opera, for the *Nibelungen Ring* at La Scala in Milan, and various operas in Amsterdam. It seemed impossible for him to do more, but he finally granted my request for the sake of personal friendship rather than anything else.

His enchanting illustrations proved to be exactly what I had hoped they would be, and the reaction of children to the book has given us both the greatest joy. Olga Stroumillo, who has a particular flair for musical research as well as for designing clear and graphic charts for layman education, collaborated in a companion volume, *A Music Manual*, which contains "things everybody might like to know and remember about music." If one attempts to analyze the workings of destiny, so much seems to hinge on apparently unrelated causes. It is very doubtful, despite my many years of scribbling in private, whether I should have

embarked upon the publication of books if Miss Lily Bliss had not once asked me to undertake the musical education of her niece.

When one gives a great deal of time and thought to experimental things, the uncertainty of the outcome is bound to bring moments of doubt and discouragement, particularly when a life is so crowded with existing duties and alluring possibilities as mine has been. "Is all this effort worth while?" was an inevitable question at such times. My chief restorative and stimulation on these occasions was the idea of building audiences for the music I loved and for musicians in whom I took a warm human interest. One day, however, I found such a striking proof of what music *or the lack of it* might mean in the life of a human being, that I realized nothing could be more important for a musical educator than to strive to evolve ways and means to make music a more accessible part of general culture.

I was visiting a friend in Rochester, New York, and she took me to a musical party at the house of George Eastman, famous kodak magnate and philanthropist. We sat in a large hallway facing a mass of flowering plants, behind which a string quartet and an organist performed the music of the evening. I sat beside Mr. Eastman, and my habit of observing how laymen listen to music soon made me aware that he was absent-minded and inattentive during some Bach organ works and a Beethoven quartet. Then the string players, accompanied by the organist, proceeded to perform a succession of inartistic arrangements of semi-popular pieces. Mr. Eastman thereupon displayed evidences of mild pleasure and turning to me, he said: "That is for me. I know nothing about music and I do not get much from all the high-brow stuff." I could hardly believe my ears. The man who had endowed an important school of music, built buildings for music

and sponsored it to the tune of millions of dollars frankly confessed that great music—for that is the real equivalent of “high-brow stuff”—meant very little to him.

The following day, when my hostess and I lunched with him, I ventured the question why he had done so much for serious music if it meant so little to him. His answer was that other people had persuaded him it was important. He added, “The people that championed music and dentistry got my confidence. That is how it happened. If you will come upstairs I will show you my real personal interest.”

We mounted to the top floor and there he showed us room after room filled with hunting paraphernalia. The resourcefulness with which human beings have devised ways and means to kill every conceivable kind of animal, bird and fish was overwhelmingly demonstrated in this exhibition. The subtle devices of physical comfort for the hunter were equally impressive. Tents, sleeping bags, special clothing and means of transportation abounded. Never in the course of my social life have I had such a stark impression as I had that day watching a feeble old man who had been a benefactor of the human race, a devoted son and loyal friend, gloat over the instruments with which he had destroyed living creatures for his pleasure throughout life.

As he closed the door of the last room he said, “That was my real life, and it is all over.” A few weeks later he committed suicide.

Whether he took his life because of some other reason or a combination of reasons I do not know, but the desolate emptiness of his life expressed in the words he uttered as he closed the door of the rooms that housed his hunting trophies and equipment would have been quite enough to account for the act. I have a strong conviction that if George Eastman had really understood

and loved the music to which he gave such generous financial support, he would be alive today. If a human being only enjoys things that demand physical strength, old age is ghastly. But spiritual and mental powers can increase as the years multiply, thus providing priceless resources as bodily vigor diminishes. The man who can enjoy what a Beethoven symphony has to give will not take his life because he no longer has the strength for pursuits on the physical plane which he enjoyed in youth.

While the experience with George Eastman greatly increased my conviction of the importance of music as an element of spiritual and mental development in the life of the human being, proofs of the efficacy of the Layman's Music Courses in bringing about this development multiplied.

The following excerpt from a letter written by Miss Theresa Berney, a student in one of our Baltimore classes, describes one of the most satisfactory results in our experience:

Dear Mme. Samaroff:

The enclosed "program notes" I am sending you at the special request of Miss Zurstadt,\* as a graphic illustration of the effect your Layman's Music Course has had on one layman.

I want very much to tell you how much that course has meant to me. I have always been passionately fond of music, and profoundly affected by it, without knowing anything about it technically. Something akin to the ordinary human curiosity about "what makes the wheels go 'round" made me want to know more about music, and I was introduced to *active* listening. Enjoyment in the case of passive listening is largely dependent on the *quality* of the *performance*, the basis of the thrill being sensitivity to sound. Now constructive knowledge leads me to an appreciation of the inherent beauty of the music itself.

\* Layman's Music Course teacher in Baltimore.



*Photographs of  
 Permanent Exhibition of the Society for Music Education in Prague, Czechoslovakia.  
 Established 1936.  
 Two books by the author, "The Layman's Music Book" and "The Magic World of Music" occupy an  
 important place in the American Section.*





It is all very exciting. Instead of just sitting back and letting the music enter into me, I go forth (figuratively speaking, of course) and enter into the music. It is like an invalid whose pleasure was to sit at a window watching life go by, and who suddenly finds that she can go out and join in the sport. The Schubert Seventh Symphony was the first attempt to prepare myself ahead of time for a concert. Previously, I had known that symphony not at all, but after studying the score and fortifying myself with the enclosed few notes, I had the amazing experience of actually feeling as if I were joining in the playing of it. . . .

The program notes Miss Berney sent might have been written by a Lawrence Gilman so far as understanding of the score is concerned, and her letter seems to document exciting possibilities in active listening.

Work in this fruitful field of modern musical education brings with it a vision of a vast enrichment of musical life in the future, through the active participation of many laymen to whom music until now has meant little more than entertainment.

# 14

## THE INTERNATIONAL MUSIC EDUCATION CONGRESS IN PRAGUE IN 1936

---

"It is a pity there is such an autumnal tinge to the honors that come with advancing years."

The speaker was the Duc de Vendôme, nephew of the Empress Elizabeth of Austria and cousin of Ludwig the Second of Bavaria. He had known Ludwig the Second and Wagner and many other personages of a period that cannot fail to fascinate a musician. His remark about the "autumnal tinge of honors that come with advancing years" followed his personal reminiscences of the end of Wagner's life.

My musical career and I were both young when this conversation took place in the library of the American Embassy in Paris. Part of a letter to my grandmother reminds me of the pleasant evening:

I played last night at the American Embassy here. The Ambassador, Henry White, and his wife are both ideal for a big diplomatic post. Everything they say and do is right. I was pro-

fessionally engaged to play at ten o'clock. Although I hate to dine out before playing, I could not resist the Whites' invitation to dinner preceding the musicale on this occasion. Their daughter recently married Count Seherr-Thoss, and the attractive young pair has just returned from a honeymoon journey. I fancy that was the real reason for the party, although the Duke and Duchess of Vendôme were treated as guests of honor and we women all curtsied when we were presented to them.

I sat beside dear old Widor at dinner. It amused us both to recall the days when I wore pigtails and went with the nuns to the organ-loft of St. Sulpice where I was sometimes permitted to sit on the bench beside him and watch him play the organ. He lisps just as badly as he did when he upset our gravity trying to say such things as "*sol à la basse, Mademoiselle*" in his master classes at the convent. His "s" is still "th" and he bats his eyes more than ever, but I am very fond of him.

I had asked Mrs. White to let me withdraw to some quiet place after dinner to collect my thoughts and she sent someone to take me to the library, but the Duc de Vendôme, who was in the midst of telling me Wagnerian stories, followed me. We had a lengthy and most interesting *tête-à-tête* conversation which was even more stimulating to my mood for music than solitude would have been. It is fascinating to meet people who have actually known one's heroes.

Possibly I was reminded of the "autumnal tinge" of "honors in advancing years" when I was informed that the University of Pennsylvania intended to confer upon me the honorary degree of Doctor of Music, because I read the letter just after I had stumbled upon the date of my birth while looking up something in the American Supplement of Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. As a rule, I never think in terms of age. Life is too full and I am always surrounded by youth, but dictionaries are ruthless reminders.

A curious coincidence of years connected with my Doctor of Music degree, that had nothing to do with my age, set me to thinking along quite impersonal lines. I had asked the secretary of the University of Pennsylvania to look up the date on which my great-grandfather, Eugene Palmer, received his degree of Doctor of Medicine from the same institution that was about to bestow an honorary doctor's degree upon me. I knew he had studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania after graduating from Yale. Curiously enough, it was found that there were exactly one hundred years between the dates on which our respective degrees were conferred.

On the day of the exciting ceremony, as I donned cap and gown and joined the procession that marched through the great hall of the university to the strains of stately music, I found myself thinking of two things: one was my daughter who seemed very small in the midst of the huge crowd, standing upon her chair in a bright red dress and waving to me (she said afterwards that we all looked exactly "like *Meistersingers* without beards"), and the other was the question whether anybody would have thought of conferring an honorary degree of any kind upon any woman a hundred years ago.

Tremendous changes have occurred in the general status of women and also in that of musicians.

John Erskine tells a story he found in some forgotten book, of three musicians, two men and a woman, who wandered from castle court to market place in medieval times. They made music and performed their juggler tricks as itinerant mountebanks while the weather was clement. When winter storms came upon them, the men retired to some monastery where they earned their daily bread by working at musical manuscripts, while their feminine

companion took temporary refuge in the oldest of the professions.

In the eighteenth century we find a Mozart treated like a servant, and at the dawn of the nineteenth century a Beethoven is considered an impossible *mésalliance* as a husband for a lady of quality.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the pampered virtuoso musician often became a darling of aristocratic society in Europe, but prejudice against the profession had by no means died out.

I can remember only one incident in my own career which pointed to social inferiority of the musician. Eugène Ysaÿe and I were engaged to play at a private musicale in the house of some *nouveau riche* people in New York. We thought nothing of being taken to our dressing-room by way of the back stairs; we were glad to escape the crowd. But when we arrived in the room reserved for our use, we found a significant table laid for two. It was evident that after the musical program the musicians were to be fed separately.

Ysaÿe played first, and when he came back to the dressing-room he informed me with great glee that the part of the room in which we performed was roped off with broad white ribbon. "The lady of the house is afraid," said Ysaÿe, "that we might stray from our place and mingle with her guests." I suggested that she might have meant to keep her guests from crowding in upon us, but Ysaÿe would not hear of any charitable interpretation. He pointed to the table laid for two and said, "I know the type."

The first thing I saw as I walked to the piano were rows of smiling, nodding friends on the other side of the white ribbon.

After the program was concluded, Ysaÿe invited me to go out to supper with him, and just as we were about to leave the house in spite of the food that had been placed upon the table laid for

two, a flustered secretary came and said Mrs. X begged us to join her at supper. We declined with thanks.

Some of my friends who were present at the musicale told me afterwards that everybody was clamoring to meet us, and Mrs. X was considerably discomfited when she was told that the musicians had fled.

The gradual change in the social status of musicians rests upon two things—a growing art and a growing democracy. I believe the growth of art itself has had much more to do with the rise of the musician in the social scale than democracy. The medieval musicians had no masterpieces of Bach and Beethoven to perform. The simple ditties they sang required no intellectual development. The gradual growth of a great art and the demands it now makes upon the performer account for the fact that the musician today is bound to be an entirely different kind of human being from his medieval prototype.

It is sad that most of the creative geniuses whose compositions have brought the great art of music to its present high standing could not themselves enjoy the complete fruits of their labors. Whenever an honor comes to me in my “advancing years,” I think of it primarily as an honor to music.

John Erskine's story flashed across my mind as the first International Congress of Music Education was opened in the House of Parliament in Prague in 1936.

The State Department in Washington had sent me as official delegate to represent the United States government on that occasion. It was undoubtedly my Layman's Music Course educational work which qualified me to participate in this particular congress, for there were no concert performers among the delegates. The Congress was organized by the Society for International

Music Education which had been founded in Prague by Dr. Leo Kestenberg, former head of the music division of the Ministry of Culture in Berlin. Dr. Kestenberg had succeeded in arousing the interest of Kamil Krofta, Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs, to such an extent that the Czechoslovakian government had provided permanent quarters for the Society in the Toskansky Palace, as well as all facilities for the Congress in 1936. The governments of sixteen nations had been invited by Kamil Krofta to send official musical delegates; the Congress was under the direct auspices of the Czech government and it was opened in the House of Parliament. I wonder if we shall live to see the day when a congress of musicians shall be welcomed in the United States Senate!

At the opening meeting seven hundred congress participants from all over the world filled the hall. The diplomatic corps occupied the gallery. On a raised tribune facing the hall, official delegates of sixteen countries sat at desks adorned with their respective flags. Kamil Krofta, presiding from the center of this tribune, welcomed each one, after which the foreign delegate briefly expressed the thanks of his government. The ceremonies were concluded by various addresses of welcome and the singing of the Czech national anthem by an excellent chorus.

I had my daughter to thank for the fact that the official document which accredited me as United States delegate helped me out of a dilemma. When the impressive roll of parchment signed by Franklin D. Roosevelt arrived, I handed it to her and asked if she would not like to keep it among her souvenirs.

"Give it to me later," replied my wise child. "You had better take it with you now."

I knew that there was to be an educational exhibit in connec-

tion with the Congress, and I felt that the least I could do as United States delegate was to take with me as many outward and visible manifestations of American musical education as I could muster. I therefore traveled with a mass of books, pamphlets, music and photographs from American educational institutions and musical industries.

At the Czech frontier I unluckily encountered one of those customs house officials who are perpetually filled with hostile suspicion. I tried to explain the somewhat unusual contents of my luggage in English, French and German, but he spoke only Czech.

The more I explained, the more hostile he became. Another official was summoned and he was, if anything, even more pessimistic than the first one. I felt so convinced I was being mistaken for some political malefactor that I probably began to look guilty from sheer anxiety. I had visions of being detained or even arrested as the officials scowled more and more fiercely over my educational paraphernalia.

The train was being held up and my fellow-passengers were growing restive when I suddenly remembered the roll of parchment reposing in a corner of my trunk. Its effect was magical. Streams of Czech conversation accompanied me as I made my way back to the train murmuring prayers of gratitude to Sonya. I assume the flow of language that only ceased when the train departed consisted of profuse apologies.

The Czech language is not exactly beautiful, as we learned to our sorrow when every address made at the Congress in any language had to be immediately repeated in Czech.

On my arrival in Prague, I joined the other two American



delegates, Professor Stiven of the University of Illinois and Carleton Sprague Smith, head of the music department of the New York Public Library. We were received with open arms by the United States Legation, and our charming Minister, Mr. Butler Wright, immediately placed a man at our disposal to act as interpreter and general assistant throughout the Congress.

To my delight I found that Webb Benton, the son of an old friend, was First Secretary of the Legation, and that his mother was keeping house for him. Mrs. Benton was present at my first concert in New York in 1905 and it was delightful to have this reunion under such unusual circumstances.

Most of the official delegates were men high in the public school systems of their respective countries. The Congress concerned itself primarily with the place of music in the life of every man. The education of the school-child was the theme of most of the successive addresses and demonstrations that continued throughout an entire week. Scant notice was taken of composers and performers—of concerts and operas. The constant topic of discussion was *how to bring music into general education*. We learned much during that week.

It was interesting to observe how the same basic educational ideas had penetrated to the four quarters of the globe. The delegates from Japan, from Australia, from North and South America and from all the countries of Europe told the same story of the musical education of children in schools; of singing, of clapping rhythms, of constructing crude instruments, of playing upon "Blockflöten" (simple flutes) and of rhythm bands. Apparently the same things are being done throughout the world wherever occidental music is known. But most addresses also wound up

with the same question: "How are we to construct a bridge from these elementary activities to some contact with higher musical art?"

The big gap that now exists between these different stages in music was formerly filled—at least for privileged children—by playing the piano or some other instrument.

Economic depression, sport, the radio and the phonograph were advanced in turn by various speakers as reasons for the dearth of such musical activities among modern children. The Dutch delegate spoke sadly of "the crowded sport stadium and the empty concert hall" in Holland. Group piano playing, school orchestras and conventional music appreciation classes were advocated by some delegates, but the demonstration of these remedies was not received with any great enthusiasm. They cannot fill the gap and the educators know it.

One interesting modern answer to the burning question was given by Professor Curt Sachs, who demonstrated his wonderful collection of musical-historical records entitled "Two Thousand Years of Music in Records." They would form a magnificent musical experience for any child.

Kamil Krofta believed that the Layman's Music Courses was another answer. When he made his farewell address at the end of the Congress, the Layman's Music Course demonstration was one of three things he singled out as particularly significant contributions.

The Dalcroze Method, wonderfully demonstrated through an address by its founder, and illustrated by a group of Swiss students, was another "bridge" mentioned in Kamil Krofta's résumé of the Congress.

I had been invited to broadcast my impressions of the Congress

to America for the National Broadcasting Company, first from Prague, and then from Vienna. I might have caused international complications—if the wrong people had happened to be listening in—by asserting in the broadcast from Vienna that the fervent nationalism of the group-singing during the Congress made it seem as though nothing would be easier than for Europe to sing itself into a major war!

It was uncanny, after broadcasting from Vienna, the city of Beethoven, Schubert and Brahms, to receive within ten minutes a telephone message from New York commenting upon the broadcast. Probably our grandchildren will not need to hold international congresses. They will be able to see each other wherever they are. They will no longer need to make addresses because they will reach each other's thoughts. Television and telepathy will be used in undreamed-of ways. Time and space will take on new and fantastic aspects.

Perhaps all the musical research I have done in recent years has made me abnormally history-conscious, but all through the Prague Congress I was obsessed by the significance of the great change in the place music occupies in human society as manifested in this Congress and in the way it was conducted. A once-despised profession has come to be recognized as supremely important, for the simple reason that humanity needs music and is aware of this need.

While some organized religions seem to be weakening and many modern mortals adhere to none, there is a distinct tendency—even on the part of the most skeptical—to seek for something beyond the border of our imperfect consciousness. Music is one of the things that can give us glimpses of mysterious and spiritual things towards which we grope. The destiny of music in the

pattern of human life seems to be to reach further into the sphere of the universe that transcends our understanding.

The genius of the great creative musicians, forging ahead of plodding humanity, has extended the use of musical sound throughout the centuries from the simple cries of primitive man to the great art works that give us deep spiritual experiences if we are attuned to receive their message.

Small wonder that men and governments seek ways and means to give music to our children.

# 15

## A QUEEN CREATES OPPORTUNITY

### The Concours Eugène Ysaÿe in Brussels

---

CERTAIN MOMENTS in life stamp themselves upon the mind in such a manner that every detail of a scene remains clear in the memory. I am sure I shall always be able to recall the events of a certain evening in Brussels in May, 1938.

The hall of the Conservatoire Royal de Musique was crowded, and there was an atmosphere of unusual expectancy. An orchestra occupied the stage except for a narrow strip just at the footlight edge, where a long table covered with green baize had been placed. Twenty-two chairs behind this table were so arranged that their occupants would face the audience.

As I stood in the wings with the other members of the international jury of the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe which was about to be inaugurated, I wondered with some trepidation whether we should have to sit facing the audience and in such close proximity to the orchestra throughout the entire proceedings, but my mind was soon at rest. At a signal from the presiding officer of the international jury, Général Vicomte Buffin de Chosal, we filed on to

the stage and took our places at the long table. Almost immediately King Leopold II of Belgium appeared in the royal box, and everyone arose and remained standing while the national anthem was sung, accompanied by the orchestra.

I was the only woman among twenty-one delegates from twenty different countries. There were two Belgian musicians on the jury besides the presiding officer; otherwise each member represented some foreign government. After appropriate inaugural addresses had been made, we left the stage and occupied the front rows of the auditorium which had been reserved for us.

Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, the founder and patron saint of the undertaking, did not appear, but we knew she was present, hidden behind the curtains of a proscenium box beneath that of her royal son. Since the tragic death of her husband, King Albert, she had not shown herself in public.

The full significance of the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe had not been clear to me when the State Department in Washington asked me to represent my country on the international jury that was being formed, but two names acted as a magnet: I had known Eugène Ysaÿe in America, and in addition to my admiration for the superb artistry of the great Belgian violinist, I had personal recollections that gave me a strong wish to participate in anything designed to honor his memory. As a young pianist I had played with Ysaÿe on more than one concert program, and he never came to Philadelphia during the years I lived there without taking a meal in my home.

The official inquiry whether I would undertake the task of serving on the international jury contained the information that the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe was organized by the Fondation Reine Elisabeth. This was another name to conjure with so far

as I was concerned. I have thoroughly shared the general admiration of the world for the noble way in which Queen Elisabeth of Belgium has conducted herself throughout life, and specifically throughout the World War. I decided, therefore, to accept the appointment, despite difficult problems in the matter of adjusting my work in America to fit the dates of the Concours, but not until I met with my colleagues at the Palais d'Egmont on the day preceding the inauguration of the Concours did I understand the true nature and significance of the event in which I was participating.

For many years the Prix de Rome that has been awarded in various countries to creative artists of different types—musicians, writers, painters, sculptors and architects—has held an important place in the realm of culture of our age. The practical aspects of the Prix de Rome—a subsidized sojourn devoted to creative work in the Eternal City—has not been the only service of the award to men of outstanding gifts: the Prix de Rome also calls attention to the individual who has won it. He is a marked man. Things are expected of him. This expectation acts as a spur and also counteracts the deadening indifference with which the world in general regards the creative artist until he becomes famous. Debussy held a Prix de Rome as an unknown young French composer. So did many who have later proved to be mediocre, but the fact that favorable conditions cannot *create* genius should not prevent us from creating the conditions that may *serve* genius.

I have acted as judge on many occasions, but I have never witnessed, or participated in, any contest that was organized with such understanding, such perfection of detail and such complete support of a city and a nation as the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe in Brussels.

The personality of Queen Elisabeth pervades the planning and the execution of every detail. She is present at every session from the first note until the last, and her personal attention is given to every problem that arises. One gains the conviction that this is almost more important than the three million francs with which she has endowed this yearly musical competition.

The plan and purpose of the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe has its origin in a letter which the Belgian master musician wrote in 1904 to Théodore Dubois, who at that time presided over the destinies of the Paris Conservatoire de Musique. Dubois had invited Ysaÿe to act as judge in the final concours of the school year, but Ysaÿe had refused, giving significant reasons that later formed the basis of the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe in Brussels.

In reading the letter I was struck by the similarity between Ysaÿe's ideas and those which caused me to found the Schubert Memorial in America.

After frank and vigorous criticism of antiquated methods that often render final school examinations so unsatisfactory, Ysaÿe pointed to the undeniable fact that "the *victors* are not always the most able" and that his experience had taught him "the contest takes place among the teachers rather than among the pupils." He expressed regret that there had been no Prix de Rome for musical performers and urged the creation of a special postgraduate prize to be won under conditions that would make it *a real guarantee of ability*.

The points in which his ideas and mine (as incorporated in the Schubert Memorial) are identical are, first, that some opportunity should be created for the young musical performer, providing a bridge between his student years and the beginning of a career, and secondly, that the conditions of such a contest should





*The twelve prize-winners of the first international piano contest, the "Concours Eugène Ysaÿe," held under the auspices of the "Fondation Reine Elisabeth" in Brussels, May 15th to May 31st, 1938. The photograph was taken in the gardens of the Royal Palace of Laeken.*

*Left to right: Rosel Schmidt, Germany, Mary Johnstone (2nd Prize), England, Nivca Marino Bellini, Uruguay, Robert Riefling, Norway, Colette Gaveau, France, Émile Guilels (1st Prize), U.S.S.R., André Dumortier, Belgium, Elisabeth, Queen of the Belgians, Jacob Elter, U.S.S.R., Leopold, King of the Belgians, Charles Houdret, Director of the "Fondation Reine Elisabeth" and the "Concours Eugène Ysaÿe," Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, Italy, Monique Yver de la Bruchollierie, France, Lance Dossor, England, Marcella Barzetti, Italy.*



be severe enough to eliminate mediocrity and provide the musician of outstanding talent with a real test of his powers.

One difference between our respective plans was caused by specific conditions in Europe and in America. Ysaÿe, relying upon traditional government support of the arts in the Old World, visualized an international contest in which some preliminary elimination process would be undertaken in different countries; whereas I, convinced as I was of the necessity of combating the still-existing discrimination against native musicians in the United States, organized the Schubert Memorial for their especial benefit.

While the general musical requirements of the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe and the Schubert Memorial are similar in scope and character, Ysaÿe had one special idea that adds a formidable task for the contestant, namely, to learn in a week's time a brand-new unpublished concerto especially composed for the occasion. The avowed purpose of this condition is to test the musical independence of the young musician. The concerto must be learned in a retreat in which all possible outside help is rendered impossible. The details of this novel departure will be given in due course as I describe the Concours which I witnessed.

The points of analogy between the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe and the Schubert Memorial even extend to the kind of criticism which greeted both undertakings at the outset.

In an address of Charles Houdret, administrative director of the Fondation Reine Elisabeth, which was reprinted in the handsome book devoted to the genesis and conditions of the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe, I found many passages that had a familiar ring. The first Concours Eugène Ysaÿe occurred in 1937 and was appropriately devoted—in the initial year of its existence—to vio-

linists. Monsieur Houdret said in his address at the University of Liège on May 9, 1938:

Abuse, lack of comprehension, lack of logic, these were the things that assailed those who created the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe . . . self-sufficient and offended in their pretensions, those whose pride was injured or whose cupidity was aroused, did not hesitate to assail what should have been beyond question.

Even a Queen, disinterestedly striving to honor the memory of her dead friend and teacher by a constructive undertaking that promised to fulfill his dream of service to generations of musicians that would follow him, could not escape the vilifications of those who suspect unworthy motives in everything, possibly because of the way their own minds work.

Neither Queen Elisabeth nor her co-workers allowed themselves to be disturbed by opposition. The plan had been made, and financially endowed. It is being quietly and effectively carried out.

I never learned why singers and cellists who were mentioned in Ysaÿe's letter were dropped when the plan of the cycle of performers provided in the statutes was formulated, but the inclusion of orchestra conductors is timely and most important. It has always been a matter of deep regret to me that we did not have the facilities within the framework of the Schubert Memorial to carry out our original plan of service to young orchestra conductors in the United States.

In the address of Director Houdret from which I have already quoted, he enlarges upon the origin and significance of contests.

He reminds us of contests in ancient Greece and Rome, of the crowning of Petrarch in the capitol in 1341, of Alcamenes, pupil

of Phidias, winning the contest in Athens through which he was commissioned to erect a statue of Venus. He alludes to famous contests of the Renaissance, to the list of winners that include John of Bologna, Benvenuto Cellini, Dante and Ammanati, and to the fruitful success of similar undertakings in the realm of science. He points to the dual object of all contests, namely, the finding of unusual talent and the encouragement of its possessor.

At the end of his address, Director Houdret points out that King Albert of Belgium, on the occasion of his coronation, pledged himself and Queen Elisabeth to interest themselves in the destiny of the humble. Today the Queen devotes herself to "the most interesting class among the humble," the unknown young musician who faces life without any power or riches other than his own talent and imagination.

There was a spirit about the whole Concours Eugène Ysaÿe that aroused a warm interest and sustained it throughout two weeks of taxing duties and grave responsibilities.

Significant features of the organization of the Concours are contained in the statutes from which I quote the following excerpts:

The competition will take place in Brussels at a date as close as possible to May 12—the date of Eugène Ysaÿe's death.

The tests will take place in the following rotation:

- In 1938: for Pianoforte
  - In 1939: for Orchestra Conductors
  - In 1940: none
  - In 1941: for Violin
  - In 1942: for Pianoforte
  - In 1943: for Orchestra Conductors
- and so on in the same order.

The competition is open to musicians of all nationalities without distinction; it will never assume any political, philosophical or linguistic character.

Her Majesty, Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, donates to the Foundation the sum of 3,000,000 Belgian Francs, which will be incorporated in the capital of the institution under the name of the "Eugène Ysaÿe Fund," and which is expressly intended to cover the expenses connected with the organization of the International Contest.

The prescribed age limits are from fifteen to thirty for violinists and pianists: from twenty-five to forty for orchestra conductors.

The twelve prizes for the piano Concours of 1938 ranged from the Grand International Eugène Ysaÿe Prize, a purse of 50,000 francs offered by Her Majesty, Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, to four thousand francs.

The program of the inaugural concert in May, 1938, included orchestral numbers conducted by Franz André and the A Minor Schumann Concerto in which the solo piano part was played by Emil von Sauer. The venerable virtuoso, whose colorful and numerous orders bespoke a long and distinguished career in the days when there were more monarchs to bestow them, seemed to provide a living link with great traditions of the past, and as the oldest member of the jury he occupied a special niche throughout the Concours, in which he may be said to have represented Ysaÿe's generation.

When we assembled at nine-thirty on the morning of the first audition, Général Buffin de Chosal seated the jury according to seniority. He tactfully exempted me—as the only woman present—from revealing my age, and placed me at his right for the duration of the Concours out of courtesy to my sex. Occasionally it is an advantage to be a woman, and I thoroughly enjoyed hav-

ing the General as my neighbor, not only because he was charming and witty, but because I was able to observe at close range the extraordinary way in which he conducted the Concours. Would that such integrity and such benevolent discipline might always be found in governing bodies and law courts!

It was a marvelous idea of the Queen's to have as president of the Fondation Reine Elisabeth and as presiding officer of the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe a man who combined an ardent interest in music with the qualities of a veteran military commander.

Every effort is made at the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe to insure fairness. The judges are not permitted to influence each other nor to expose themselves to outside influence through any contact with the contestants or with those interested in them. On the day of the first audition we had a meeting at the Palais d'Egmont, at which Général Buffin de Chosal read us the rules, discussed each one, answering various questions from members of the jury in order to insure complete understanding, and then requested us to sign a document in which we pledged ourselves to abide by the regulations of the contest. We were informed that if difficulties should arise they would be submitted to a royally appointed judicial commission consisting of Baron Verhaegen, honorary president of the Supreme Court, Baron de le Court, first president of the Court of Appeals of Brussels, and Baron van den Brandt de Reeth, first district attorney at the Court of Appeals in Brussels.

Not even this august body nor the numerous rules that seemed to provide for every possible contingency could have insured the fairness of the Concours so effectively, however, as the personality and leadership of the Général Vicomte Buffin de Chosal. He had no vote in the contest. His task was to see that it proceeded in all fairness. He showed us the utmost courtesy, but despite the quiet

and unobtrusive way in which he exercised his authority, this contact with an old soldier—a new experience for most of the jury members—was calculated to quell the most unruly artistic temperament. I found the General somehow exerting a long-distance influence that regulated the length of my breakfast and forced me to be punctual despite any temptation to sleep late or linger over the morning mail. If I had a burning desire to find out how my neighbor, the Norwegian delegate, Mr. von Erpekum Sem, felt about a contestant, the General's influence, without his saying a word, interfered. A look from his clear, honest blue eyes was enough, as a rule, to silence a too-loquacious member of the jury. Sometimes he would "take his bell" to the audience. Tickets were sold for the auditions and there were always interested listeners. Occasionally the adherents of a certain contestant, or a group of his compatriots, would undertake a public demonstration of applause on his behalf. It was then that the General, his eyes blazing, would vigorously ring a large bell with which he gave various signals during the proceedings, and shout the command, "Pas de manifestations, s'il vous plaît!" That voice had sent men into battle in the World War. The "manifestations" immediately ceased.

Only one thing got the better of the General. It was a box placed on the table in front of him, containing an apparatus that provided for communication with his assistants backstage. It was not like an ordinary telephone. The General spoke into it as into a microphone, and a voice came out of the box as from a radio. Apparently the installation was not quite perfect, for the functioning of the apparatus was somewhat eccentric and unpredictable.

One day, in the midst of a lengthy session, a voice from the



box murmured softly that one of the contestants was ill and would not play. The General expressed concern and asked whether the illness was serious. All this was inaudible to the audience. All of a sudden, however, a violent shout came from the box within which an unexpected connection with a loud-speaker had evidently taken place, "The contestant has eaten too much caviar!" No detailed medical report could have given the startled audience a clearer picture of the unhappy contestant's condition than that single sentence from the indiscreet box. The General hastily pushed all the buttons within reach in order to prevent further revelations, and his relations with the box throughout the rest of the Concours betrayed a certain unmistakable uneasiness.

My colleagues on the international jury afforded endless human and artistic interest. I had enjoyed many enlightening experiences as United States delegate at the International Music Education Congress in Prague, discussing musical problems with other delegates from different parts of the world and listening to their public addresses, but in Brussels the members of the jury who were together all day every day for a week learned to know each other much better as human beings. Even though we were scrupulous about adhering to the rule which forbade the discussion of contestants or anything approaching concerted action in making the awards, we enlivened recess periods with conversations that revealed many a musical point of interest in different countries.

The auditions of the first week were for the purpose of elimination. The jury for these elimination contests came from the following countries: Lithuania, England, France, Soviet Russia, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Australia, Belgium, Poland, Esthonia, Greece, Denmark, Norway, United States, Jugoslavia, Sweden and Italy.

One of the most rigidly enforced rules was that no member of the jury was permitted to have a pupil in the contest.

For the final contests the number of jury members was increased to twenty-six. Among the members of the jury, who all held distinguished positions in their respective countries, were such internationally famous pianists as Emil Sauer, Robert Casadesus, Ignaz Friedman, Giesecking, Orloff, and Arthur Rubinstein.

The members of the jury were guests of the Fondation Reine Elisabeth while in Brussels, and were quartered in the houses of leading citizens who thus co-operated with the Queen in making the Concours a unique experience for those who participated in it. My kind host, the banker Jules Philippson, and his charming family left nothing undone to make my stay in Brussels delightful, and comfortable living conditions were most welcome during days that taxed one's physical strength and musical endurance to the utmost. We heard eighty-seven contestants from twenty-three different countries. Four of the contestants were listed: *Nationalité Indéterminée*. A period of twenty minutes was allotted to each contestant by the regulations of the Concours. To hear eighty-seven pianists play twenty minutes each was in itself a considerable task, but to listen with the active interest, the concentration and the receptivity necessary to fair and competent judgment, was a prodigious undertaking.

One of the most impressive features of the contest was that each member of the jury really tried to do this. It is true we were somewhat wan and pallid specters at the evening receptions given in our honor by the Governor of Brabant, the Minister of Education and the Mayor of Brussels. The hospitality of the city and its inhabitants was almost overwhelming after the duties of our busy days, but we managed to enjoy it.

The thing that kept us alert was the incredible intensity with which the young contestants played. There were eighty-seven different degrees of talent and ability, but that one quality of burning emotional intensity was seldom lacking. When a mature artist plays in public he usually gives of his best. His selfish interests as well as his artistic integrity demand that he should. But once his reputation is established, the degree of success he wins at any single concert is not a matter of life and death. For these youngsters the Concours was a matter of life and death. I have been a musical judge on many occasions where competition was keen and contestants were on their mettle, but I never felt an atmosphere quite like that of the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe in Brussels. Was it the presence of the public in addition to a large international jury that produced an unusual excitement, or did these young novices sense the significance of a struggle quite beyond their competition among themselves—the struggle of their chosen profession itself in a strife-torn world?

To me it seemed as though young knights were tilting for the privilege of going forth to fight for a cause, for the youngest generation of leading musicians in modern Europe will have the responsibility of keeping art alive in the midst of new and strange conditions that are creating radical changes in the musical profession.

The general standard of the Concours was high, and the problem of classification often extremely difficult. In the first elimination contest, which lasted four days, we chose nineteen out of eighty-seven competitors for the second test. Out of the nineteen who played in the second elimination contest we chose twelve prize-winners who would compete for place in the finals. The process of elimination was heartbreaking, especially when

a contestant was nearly as good as the winners and had obviously given his life's blood to his task. Being a judge in this contest was worse than being a critic in New York! The members of the jury felt the human drama involved so strongly that they assured each other daily of their determination never again to take part in such a contest.

It was extremely interesting to note racial and national characteristics and to realize how strong personality can be in an obviously undeveloped human being.

At the end of the second elimination contest the twelve winners were lodged in the Royal Palace of Laeken, where they undertook to carry out Ysaÿe's idea of learning a new concerto, still in manuscript, and thus demonstrating their musical and interpretative independence. They were forbidden all contact with the outside world and had a week within which to accomplish their formidable task.

The concerto for piano and orchestra chosen for the contest was by the Belgian composer, Jean Absil. It had been selected from a number of concertos submitted by Belgian composers in a special composition contest which preceded the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe. In this way the Queen stimulated the creative musicians of Belgium to a special effort. Absil received twenty-five thousand francs in addition to the honor of having his work chosen for the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe. His concerto was a well-made composition in modern idiom and provided an excellent test for the musical independence and technical powers of the young artists who had to learn it so quickly.

The Queen took good care of her artistic prisoner-guests. Comfortable quarters, good pianos and nourishing food were provided. I was told that the Queen replaced three beds which

she did not consider good enough for the much-needed rest of the young contestants. It is typical of her broadminded and thoroughly idealistic approach to the contest that she had two Soviet Russians and one German Nazi under her roof at this time. It would be difficult to imagine a more complete fulfillment of the statute: "The competition is opened to musicians of all nationalities without distinction; it will never assume any political, philosophical or linguistic character." The example of this Queen, wife and mother of kings, and the daughter of a Bavarian (Wittelsbach) duke, might well shine forth like a beacon light in our topsy-turvy modern world.

While the contestants were in retreat preparing themselves for the final ordeal, some jury members flew to London or Paris for the week, but most of us remained in Brussels to enjoy the pleasant things that had been arranged for us.

During the first week each of us had had a private audience with the Queen in an intermission of the auditions. In speaking with her I was struck by the real understanding of music which she displayed. Shortly before the final contests began, the jury members were summoned to the Palace of Laeken for an audience with King Leopold. After a short conversation with the sympathetic young monarch, at which Queen Elisabeth was present, we each emerged with a box containing the insignia of a Belgian order. I doubt whether an honor of this description was ever more truly appreciated than by those whose participation in the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe had given them such a profound impression of the sincerity and nobility with which the power of royalty was being used for the benefit of art.

Only in a monarchy would the atmosphere, the facilities and the special organization of the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe be pos-

sible. The offices in the Palais d'Egmont, the hall and anterooms of the royal Conservatory of Music which served for the elimination contests, and the Royal Opera de La Monnaie where the final competitions took place, provided a background as difficult to duplicate as Général Vicomte Buffin de Chosal, the Judicial Commission, the Queen's Master of the Household, Count de Grunne, who watched over our comfort and pleasure, and the character of the social events with which we were entertained.

The orchestra that was available whenever needed would have cost something like thirty thousand dollars, according to my rough estimate of time involved, in democratic America.

The Royal Opera de La Monnaie was completely sold out for the performances of the last three days. Excitement was at fever heat. The foreign embassies and legations in Brussels had taken their respective jury members and contestants under their wing, and a friendly national rivalry was added to musical competition. Each of the young competitors was heard in a program that lasted an hour and included the new Absil concerto, another concerto (of the contestant's choice) and a solo piece selected by the jury. Two contestants were heard in the afternoon and two in the evening on three successive days.

After the final evening session we had to cast our vote. The audience dispersed at half-past ten to while away the time in nearby cafés and restaurants, while we sat around a long table and silently filled out the papers that recorded our decisions. We had heard each of the twelve prize-winners in widely varied programs in three different contests. This had enabled us to arrive at very definite conclusions. Some of us had at first doubted the wisdom of imposing upon such young artists the stupendous task

of learning a new concerto in a week and attempting a public performance of it with orchestra under grueling conditions, but the final results not only proved that it could be done by all the contestants but that this particular test revealed unsuspected qualities both favorable and unfavorable.

The young musicians were not forced to memorize the new concerto, but two of them did. Count de Grunne told me that some of the contestants practiced fourteen hours a day at Laeken!

It was midnight at the fateful final session before the audience reassembled and the members of the jury returned to their places. That scene also impressed itself indelibly upon my mind. The jury sat at long tables in the center boxes facing the stage. King Leopold occupied the royal box to the right; Queen Elisabeth was still invisible. Foreign diplomats were scattered through the hall; everyone wore full evening dress, and orders if they had them. There was a gala atmosphere.

Director Houdret made the announcements of the awards on the stage in front of a microphone that broadcast them to an interested public in most European countries.

The first prize went to the twenty-two-year-old Soviet Russian pianist, Emile Guilels. The announcement was received with genuine enthusiasm, for his playing had been superb throughout the entire ordeal. The second prize went to a brilliant young Englishwoman, Mary Johnstone, also twenty-two years of age. Among the other winners there was one Belgian, one Norwegian, one Englishman, one German, another Russian, one Uruguayan, two Frenchwomen and two youthful Italians, a girl of seventeen and a boy of eighteen. Each one received warm applause as the awards were announced. At the end of these proceedings the national anthem was succeeded by an ovation to King Leopold, and then

cries of "*Vive la Reine*" became so insistent that Queen Elisabeth finally appeared and stood beside the King.

It was her first public appearance since the death of King Albert, and one's heart ached at the thought of the tragic bereavements that had widowed the mother as well as the son. It was with genuine feeling that the members of the international jury laid wreaths on the graves of Queen Astrid and King Albert before leaving Brussels.

The Concours Eugène Ysaÿe ended officially when the prizes were announced, but a final festivity took place in the shape of a garden party in the magnificent conservatories of the Royal Palace of Laeken. There the wives of the jury members (in my case my young daughter Sonya) were formally presented to the King and to Queen Elisabeth by the ambassadors or ministers of their respective countries. The court and diplomatic corps lent an atmosphere of formality to the occasion, but light summer dresses against the background of gorgeous flowers provided at the same time a note of gayety that was increased by the pleasure of being able personally to congratulate the gallant young prize-winners.

An artistic ideal that outlived its originator had borne noble fruit, thanks to a queen who understands so well how to carry on in our modern world the loftiest traditions of royalty, among which none is more important than service to the arts and encouragement of the artist.



# 16

## TRACING THE PATTERN OF MUSICAL DESTINY

### Observation at Close Range

---

THE DINNER guests at Government House in Regina were listening to a story. The drawing-room was bright and cheerful but somewhat stifling, for despite the warmth of a spring evening all the windows were tightly closed. One of the dust storms peculiar to the region raged without.

I had been sent to Saskatchewan by the Carnegie Foundation for the purpose of studying local musical conditions and of making a recommendation for or against a chair of music at the Saskatchewan University in Saskatoon. I arrived just in time for an elaborate musical festival held in the provincial capital, Regina, and also for one of the famous dust storms, which force the inhabitants of that part of the world to keep double windows on their houses throughout the summer as well as the winter.

The atmosphere of Government House at Regina was a striking proof of the extraordinary ability with which the British create their own atmosphere in any part of the world. When one crossed the threshold of this house in northwest Canada one was in Eng-

land, but the dust storm that shook the sturdy building suggested other things—pioneer perils and the mighty struggle of man when great forces of nature are unloosed.

One of the guests related quietly, but with a deep repressed emotion, a tragic tale in which the hero was the victim of one of these storms that descend like a scourge upon the great, fertile, wheat-growing country, so aptly called the "bread-basket of Canada."

A young Englishman, we were told, had left his native Yorkshire in quest of a livelihood in distant British dominions. He had tried his luck in Australia, and then in South Africa, but always, when he had worked his way up to a certain degree of prosperity, misfortune of one kind or another overtook him and obliged him to begin afresh. Finally he decided to try growing wheat in Saskatchewan.

Laboriously he earned enough to buy land. He invested his last savings in seed and in the implements for sowing it, but hardly had he finished planting his crop when ominous clouds heralded the approach of one of the dreaded windstorms. He stood helpless in the doorway of his barn and watched his last hopes vanish in a whirlwind that swept away soil and seed. Then he shot himself.

The simplicity with which this story was told left us shuddering. It was as though we had felt the icy breath of that ultimate human hopelessness beyond which no will to live exists. The howling of the dust storm fell upon our ears like some destructive orgy of evil spirits.

The memory of this impression flashed across my mind when I learned in 1931 of the suicide of Klibansky, a once-prosperous musician, in New York. The depression was upon us, and mu-

sicians who had wider connections in the profession were already uneasy. We had heard here and there about the difficulties of musicians who could not find employment, but the suicide of a man like Klibansky, revealing as it did the complete destruction of once-prosperous professional activities, brought us face to face with the fact that the situation was becoming desperate.

Were we about to witness a widespread catastrophe? Were the fair musical seeds that had been sown in the fertile soil of the New World to be swept away before our eyes?

These questions were anxiously discussed by three women who happened to meet on the day the suicide was announced in the newspapers. Mrs. Ernest Hutcheson, Mrs. Ernest Schelling and I had lunched together, and we talked far into the afternoon, so shocked were we by the news. None of us was so constituted as to remain inactive under the influence of such an impression.

It was decided that Mrs. Schelling, whose apartment was larger than Mrs. Hutcheson's or mine, should call a meeting for the purpose of organizing some sort of emergency relief agency for musicians. We made out a list of musicians and musicians' wives then in New York who might be of most service to the cause, and sent them urgent invitations to meet with us.

When we held the first meeting we organized ourselves according to all the canons of parliamentary law, so as to be in a position to call a larger second meeting for the election of permanent officers and to make a formal announcement of our existence as an organization. Out of these humble beginnings grew the Musicians' Emergency Aid which has since become the Musicians' Emergency Fund, one of the most useful and best conducted welfare organizations in New York. We elected Mr. Walter Damrosch chairman at the second meeting, and when we found

that he was prepared to take over the lion's share of organizational and promotional work, we thankfully left it to him, for our hands were already full with other duties. His successor as chairman, Mrs. Vincent Astor, is now carrying on the work in splendid fashion, and throughout all the intervening years one of those we had invited to the very first meeting, the executive director, Mrs. Hermann Irion (best known to the musical public as the brilliant Hungarian pianist Yolanda Merö), has accomplished the actual relief work, the distribution of funds, and the salvaging of many a stranded existence, with a warm-hearted zeal and an executive ability that cannot be too highly praised. The whole thing could never have been what it is without the gifts and undivided devotion she has brought to it.

Why was all this necessary? Was it solely because of a passing depression, or is the destiny of the art of music in the throes of far-reaching evolutionary processes?

Musicians were all aware of certain changes brought about by the World War, but we are too near to the recent unemployment crisis to be able to formulate a clear-cut explanation of it that would have any value. Most musicians believe that while the passing depression has played its part, profounder changes must be dealt with before we can re-establish a basis of future professional security.

The greatest problem to be solved for the musical profession is that of the radio. How will broadcasting develop and how will its development affect the art of music and the lives of musicians? From the beginning the radio divided professional musicians and music-lovers into two groups—the pessimists and the optimists. I place the pessimists first because—so far—they have been much

more numerous. The ultra-pessimists have never been able to see even a possibility of good in the radio. They at once predicted that it would prevent people from attending concerts or operas if good music and fine artists were broadcast, and it would ruin public taste if this were not done. It had a horrible sound, quite unfit for musical ears, continued the moaning pessimists, and the advertising of a popular laxative through the playing of a famous musician in a commercial radio hour was a vulgarity that amounted to a national disgrace.

The optimists thought in terms of what the radio could bring to shut-ins, to people on lonely farms and ships at sea, to the geographically or economically underprivileged throughout the world. They were inclined to wax sentimental over this new wonder of the universe, despite the absurd ways in which it has so often been used.

A seat on the fence is no heroic position but I frankly confess that I was unable to remain long in the company of the pessimists or in that of the optimists without becoming thoroughly impatient with each extreme point of view. At the time when radio became a subject of heated controversy I would listen to one of the inspiring New York Philharmonic-Symphony concerts conducted by Toscanini and broadcast on Sunday afternoons, and I could find no sense in the gloomy outlook of the pessimists. These concerts were eagerly awaited and enjoyed by millions of people who otherwise could not have heard them. But, again, when I listened to an unctuous voice advertising frigidaires to the tune of mutilated musical masterpieces, or when I found my child listening to some of the duller and more stupid entertainment programs that spell the ultimate intellectual deterioration of the addict to such

mental nourishment, I felt that the sentimental optimists together with the "misleaders" of the broadcasting systems should be shot before dawn.

It would be fruitless to elaborate upon the amount of tasteless and empty entertainment that has been bestowed upon the world in a misguided attempt to "give the public what it wants." These things are only too familiar to everybody. In the early years of broadcasting, radio authorities made the same mistake the phonograph companies once did: they underrated public taste. They still underrate their own ability to create taste.

The radio shares with the press the greatest power for good or evil in the human life of our modern world. That certain leaders have recognized a responsibility in the exercise of this power is reflected in a slow but continuous improvement in certain directions. More efforts of an educational nature are being made, the English used by announcers has improved and some of the light entertainment so liberally offered has been placed in the hands of men who have real wit, like Eddie Cantor. The world needs the fun real comedians can provide.

The music of the air includes everything from the cheapest claptrap to fine performances. The value of the latter is often lessened by an artistically barbarous mutilation. The radio "time-devil" constantly shows his grinning face in the impudent cuts that reduce a musical composition to half its normal length. Musicians whose talents and skill are worthy of better things, spend their lives "arranging" and chopping up musical compositions to fit American radio conditions. The human being who likes his automobile with all its wheels on, his portraits with two eyes and the normal length of nose, in short the person who in general objects to distortion or mutilation, prays for the day when

modern composers will have created a special music fitting radio-time conditions, or perhaps even for the Utopia in which musical masterpieces from former ages will always be performed as their creators intended they should be, regardless of the tempo of modern life and the commercial value of time on the air in America.

That this is quite possible is proved every day by radio activity in Europe and by some broadcasts in the United States.

Our system of commercial advertising hours in America has its favorable as well as its obviously absurd sides. The incongruity of attempting to mingle fine art and commercial advertising is a subject of constant criticism and considerable merriment in other countries. At the same time, many of those who criticize or ridicule the custom would soon forget their objections if they could earn the fees that are paid to performers in the American commercial hours on the radio. Nowhere in the world are radio performers so highly paid.

In a relatively short time a "radio type" has emerged. One hears of "radio personality," "radio voice" and "radio technique." Favorite announcers earn handsome salaries. The conduct of the broadcasts necessitates a certain routine experience in presentation and timing, and a certain knack of projecting personality quite apart from the function of the technicians who accomplish the actual miracle of broadcasting. The big broadcasting station with its soundproof studios, its well-oiled machinery and efficient personnel is a fantastic world by itself. It has a unique atmosphere.

Curiously enough, one of the radio developments that seems to be most dangerous to the general welfare of music as well as to that of musicians (excepting of course those that are directly connected with it) is the new radio orchestra of the National Broadcasting Company conducted by Arturo Toscanini. Musical

idealists have been clamoring so loudly for good music over the radio that it seems paradoxical to question anything of that description, and yet many thoughtful musicians fear the ultimate result of this new venture.

I first heard of it from its creator, Mr. David Sarnoff of the National Broadcasting Company, on a journey from Washington to New York in December, 1936. Mr. Sarnoff had just made a brilliant address concluding the first National Radio Education Conference in Washington. During the conference I had been chairman of the music division, and Mr. Sarnoff asked me to lunch with him on the train as we returned to New York. It seemed to me at the time that his plan to invite Mr. Toscanini to conduct a great radio orchestra represented a tremendous step forward. I was still under the influence of the recent conference during which many brilliant speakers and leading educators had battled for radio uplift. But as I began to hear grave anxiety expressed by my many friends on the boards of symphony orchestras in various cities, a menacing shadow seemed to lurk behind the brilliant project which was advertised in clarion tones throughout the land. The shadow deepened when I heard rumors that the new organization was luring away some of the best players in other orchestras with offers of higher salaries. Was this another dust storm—perhaps a *golden* dust storm—that threatened the carefully planted musical seed in many American cities?

When I finally heard the National Broadcasting Company Orchestra concerts both over the air and in the auditorium from which they were broadcast, I became aware that despite the claims of super-excellence made in magnificently printed propaganda literature, there was really nothing new in what was being offered



to the radio public except a significant gesture by the National Broadcasting Company.

Mr. Toscanini's superb conducting was already well known to the radio public through his Sunday broadcasts with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra over a period of years. His radio audience had then heard the same type of program that he now gives for the National Broadcasting Company. So far as the orchestra is concerned, the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York is still superior to the new National Broadcasting organization in spite of the rumored filching of best performers from various other orchestras. What has therefore been gained?

In order to understand this whole question, the particular conditions of national life and musical life in the United States should be kept in mind. Nothing is more valuable to the general welfare of music than the existence of a fine symphony orchestra in a community. Wherever one is found it is a pride of the city. It cannot be replaced by a broadcast no matter how fine the latter may be.

The living musicians of the local orchestra not only play in the symphony concerts, they make music individually and in groups; they teach music and arouse musical interest through their personal contact with the citizen; their conductor is a civic personage. To advertise a radio enterprise in terms of "the greatest orchestra," the "greatest living conductor," in short, as a super-institution which inevitably implies the inferiority of all other symphonic organizations, may easily give a deathblow to many such civic undertakings throughout the country. The citizen who is asked to subscribe for the concerts of the local symphony orchestra may well reply, "Why should I? I can hear the greatest

orchestra and the greatest conductor without cost over my radio at home on Saturday night!"

On October 16, 1938, Mr. Linton Martin, musical editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, devoted an article to the present problems of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Among other things he writes:

Problems posed for the great symphony orchestras of the country today are not merely internal and local. *They include the competition of radio* and other activities and agencies, as the Orchestra's management points out in a leaflet. . . . There is no blinking the fact that radio must be reckoned with both as income and as enemy. To ignore it would be ostrich-like in the foolishness and futility of sticking one's head in the shifting symphonic sands of these times. . . . Of course radio cannot exactly be called a Frankenstein's monster in the Orchestra's life, since it is not the Orchestra's creature or creation. Yet though it has been of service in the past, it may now prove a musical menace because of regular broadcasts of other orchestras—the New York Philharmonic, the Detroit Symphony, and now the National Broadcasting Company's Orchestra formed last season for the redoubtable Arturo Toscanini.

It is this Orchestra especially and above all others which must necessarily give the jitters to symphonic organizations selling tickets for Saturday night concerts. Last night, for instance, offered the choice between hearing Mr. Ormandy conduct Debussy's *Iberia* and the Sibelius Second Symphony for symphony subscribers in this city, and Toscanini conduct the Brahms Third Symphony and Tschaikowsky's *Romeo and Juliet* on the air and with armchair ease.

Mr. Martin thus publicly discusses the doubts and fears I have heard privately expressed in many different cities.

Were the pessimists right, after all?

This matter of the orchestra of the National Broadcasting Com-

pany proves how necessary it is for those who wield the power of the radio to have selfless idealism and wisdom as well as a clear vision that enable them to perceive a possible lurking danger even in things that are in themselves good. Nothing would be worse for the welfare of music than to have the radio undertake to furnish a sort of musical super-supply that would satisfy existing demand to the extent of destroying other musical activities. No ravages of the machine age could equal the destruction such a course would cause in the musical profession. The most inspirational type of performer is rare, but a country of one hundred and thirty million inhabitants is bound to produce more gifted musicians of a high type than the radio could possibly employ.

Another general danger, if the radio goes too far in monopolizing various fields, is that it might eventually inaugurate a new era in human history—the “sitting age.” Who knows but what, just as the skull of the Neanderthal Man is somewhat different from ours, the bodily formation of the “sitter-man” of the possibly dawning era would gradually develop special characteristics in that portion of his anatomy affected by his continuous sitting posture? Already we have had tree-sitters and flagpole-sitters who have demonstrated an extraordinary degree of human endurance in sitting upon the most uncomfortable objects. Humanity in general now demands to be transported with the utmost speed from one place to another—but always sitting. If we could think in terms of millions of years, it may be that the discovery of the wheel began the new era, and now the radio, together with television, may complete the evolution by which the “sitting age” will reach its apex.

In a potential sitting-age, everything the world can offer through sight and sound would be brought to the sitter by the

radio and television. The greatest industry of the age would be the fabrication of easy chairs. The subway and the motor bus would follow the trolley car to oblivion, because nobody would need to go anywhere. Automobiles would be limited to delivery trucks that would bring to the sitter his daily nourishment and the various objects of feverish desire created by radio advertising. Efficiently constructed robots together with cooking, washing and cleaning machines would perform the duties necessary to daily life. Human beings would just sit. Perhaps the sport fever that is abroad in the world is an unconscious defense measure of the human race, a last stand against the encroachment of a possible sitting age.

It may be that we can still be spared the loss of our upright posture. Much depends on the way the radio is used. It is certainly possible—if not easy—to prevent the radio from exercising a destructive influence upon existing human endeavor outside of its field. A sane policy with the dual objective of *conservation* and *constructiveness* could accomplish miracles. And while we demand this wisdom of radio leaders, let us not forget to demand of ourselves that we should take an active part in this important development. If we were more critical, some of our radio comedians would have to raise their standards and amuse us and our children with something better than horseplay, or jokes so ancient and feeble that it is a wonder they can stir up enough vibrations to travel through the air; if we were more intelligent, we would demand culturally informative or truly artistic broadcasts during the important hours in the day when people are free to listen to them; if we took the trouble to write and send in our criticism or our demands, we might even succeed in persuading the radio advertiser that we are not such morons as he apparently suspects

us of being. I never yet knew an American radio magnate or radio advertiser (and I have known a good many) who did not sway like a reed in the breeze before the slightest gust of public demand.

If the Great God Public only knew and exercised its power in the radio world! Never has the *vox populi* come so near to being the *vox dei*.

Next to the radio, the most important problem in the world of music is how to replace certain props of professional musical life that threaten to give way or have already disappeared.

It has been pointed out in a previous chapter that leading citizens of the United States had taken over in democracy the support and patronage of music once supplied by the royalty, aristocracy or governments of Europe. Now these generous democratic friends of music are no longer able to perform their important function with the same liberality. The millionaire still exists, but his wings are clipped. The rich man is not popular in the modern world. Millions of people are convinced he should not be permitted to be rich. At the same time, in spite of an income that has been considerably diminished by taxes and the antics of the stock market, he is expected to give and spend as though nothing had happened. It is the rich man who built hospitals and founded every kind of institution for the needy in the United States. He is still expected to maintain them despite his losses. He is criticized if he lives in grand style, but he is also condemned if he dismisses his servants and retrenches his mode of life. There is little he can do to appease the critics who resent his very existence, but the question here is, how can he be replaced or assisted in connection with musical organizations like the Metropolitan Opera and symphony orchestras? There are iconoclasts who

openly proclaim that all such existing organizations should be wiped out. These are the people who, dissatisfied with their place in life, always see their best chance of advancement in the destruction of an existing order of things so that they may climb to the top in a new one. But fortunately there are many intelligent and disinterested human beings who believe in conserving what has value in our inheritance from the past, especially in the arts where, despite profound changes in form and methods, there is unmistakable and artistically important continuity throughout the ages.

In European countries, where government support of the arts is a lasting tradition that seems to survive all changes and is kept alive by Monarchist, Fascist, Nazi and Communist alike, the problem is less acute, but in a democracy, you and I, my dear reader, have a real responsibility. Casting a vote from time to time is not enough of a contribution to democratic life.

The patriotic American can point with pride to the first official undertaking of his Federal government in the domain of music—the Works Progress Administration Music Project. There may have been abuses and imperfections in its functioning—this could scarcely be avoided in the hurried creation of an emergency relief undertaking of such magnitude—but, in general, the American tax-payer can feel that in this particular piece of work his money has been well spent. I can affirm this with conviction because, as a member of the National Advisory Committee, I have been kept well informed. The success of this work is largely due to the personality, ability and unflagging energy of its director, Nikolai Sokoloff. His experience as conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra has stood him in good stead in his directorship of this W. P. A. music project. As a young man, he did not sign a contract to conduct an established orchestra in Cleveland; he

had to build one. He knows every step of the way and his experience, knowledge and foresight have made it possible for him to combine the urgent necessity of temporary relief for musicians with a far-reaching constructive program designed to lay the foundation of useful and permanent musical undertakings throughout the country. Symphony orchestras (composed of unemployed musicians) have been created in many places where none had previously existed; educational opportunities of a musical nature have aroused the interest of those who could not afford customary tuition fees; operas have been performed for millions who had never had the opportunity to hear them; best of all, many new works by American composers have had a hearing, and the general level of performance has been so good that the musicians who participated in them did not necessarily feel degraded, even though being on relief is never pleasant. Sokoloff's achievement and that of his able lieutenants throughout the United States may well exercise a strong influence on our musical future.

All this does not mean, however, that the United States government is prepared to assume control of the important existing musical institutions which we have inherited from the past, or to grant a subsidy for their support. There has been some talk of a Federal Department of Fine Arts, but most musicians are afraid of it because the specific problems connected with music demand such expert solution. Our democratic political appointments are too often made on the basis of considerations other than ability and experience. If a Department of Fine Arts were to be something more than a nonproductive, bureaucratic factory of statistics, the man in charge would have to possess a creative imagination, an artistic experience and an executive ability seldom

united in a single human being. He would also have to be retained long enough to carry out his plans. The change in leadership and consequent improvisation of new departures peculiar to democracy would not work here.

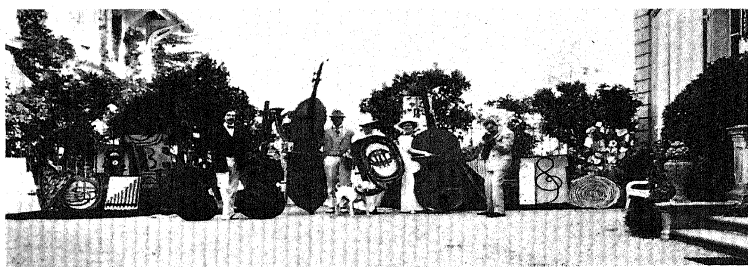
In the absence of government support, one way to replace the dwindling resources of the individual music patron in the United States is concerted action on the part of interested groups. Ludwig the Second of Bavaria supported Wagner single-handed in more than one hour of urgent need, but in the United States it has been necessary to form a League of Composers in order to further the interests of contemporary creative musicians. Our generation is not curious about new music. The lack of spontaneous demand for serious music by living composers has threatened their very existence, and yet without a renewal of creative processes an art is dead.

Individual conductors, notably Stokowski and Koussevitzky, have performed many new orchestral works in the teeth of considerable opposition. It was an ungrateful task. The music was usually difficult and necessitated much extra work; the committees and managers of orchestras disliked such projects because they occasioned extra expense in the shape of rights of performance; and they were unpopular with audiences. The net result was only too often a frigid reception by the public and adverse criticism in the newspapers. Few solo singers or instrumentalists have sacrificed themselves on the altar of modern music. Novelties on the operatic stage are more popular in Europe (where incessant repetition of the standard repertory throughout a lengthy season lends a special value to a new work) than in America, where operatic production is so prohibitively expensive that impresarios shy away from anything outside the boundaries of existing taste.





*Rehearsal of a merry performance at Carnegie Hall for the benefit of the Musicians' Emergency Fund in New York, 1933. Famous musicians play strange instruments, including lawn-mowers and typewriters. Those present are Lucrezia Bori (in black), Yolanda Mero (in white), the author (blowing a passionate solo on a toy trumpet), Harold Bauer, Georges Barrère, John Erskine, Rudolf Ganz, Ernest Hutcheson, José Iturbi, Paul Kochanski, Felix Salmond, Albert Stoessel, Ernest Schelling, Ernest Peixotto, Chalmers Clifton, Fabien Sevitzky, Harold Samuels, Josef Lhevinne, Walter Damrosch, Alfred Pochon and the conductor of the performance, John Philip Sousa.*



*At the Ernest Schelling château Garengo at Celigny on the Lake of Geneva in the summer of 1912. Strange instruments assembled for the rehearsal of a "Modern Symphony" later performed at a birthday party of Ignaz Paderewski at his nearby estate of Morges.*

*Left to right: Ernest Schelling, Francis Rogers, Mrs. Ernest Schelling, Olga Samaroff Stokowski and Leopold Stokowski have aroused the interest of the Schelling dog Niki.*



Most novelties at the Metropolitan are chosen because of their lack of modernity.

Some agency outside the performances of existing organizations or the concerts of conservative soloists was necessary if America was to hear its share of the really new provocative music of the age.

Since the inception of the League of Composers in New York, its executive director, Mrs. Arthur Reis, has performed a service of exceptional value to modern music with a degree of objectivity rare in a woman. She has succeeded in welding together a group of composers who, without her influence, might have been too individualistic to work in harmony for a common cause. Her book, *Composers in America*, covering the period 1912-37, is the most authoritative work of its kind. Its pages reveal the existence of a mass of music by American composers scarcely known to Americans and not at all to the outside world. Some day we shall have to settle down to the task of examining all this music and finding out what we really possess in the way of a national musical treasure. What little we have heard of it is largely due to the activities of the League of Composers under the energetic directorship of Mrs. Reis. With the help of an auxiliary committee formerly headed by Countess Mercati and now under the chairmanship of Mrs. Myron C. Taylor, she has organized gala performances of many important new works such as Alban Berg's opera *Wozzeck*, conducted by Leopold Stokowski, and a long list of compositions for orchestra, chamber music groups, solo instruments and singers, which we otherwise might never have heard. The scope of the League's activities has been international, and its mouthpiece, the magazine *Modern Music*, has furnished information that has been invaluable to us and will be still more

important to the musical historian. The League of Composers has recently extended its usefulness by offering commissions for new compositions and insuring their performance with the co-operation of leading orchestras, choruses and soloists. What a Prince Eszterházy once did for a Haydn, the League of Composers is striving to do in a different degree and a modern way for twentieth-century composers.

The problem of replacing the individual music patron or the small group of wealthy men who once bore the burden of the inevitable deficits of symphony orchestras, and specifically of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, was perplexing until a brilliant and truly modern possibility was devised by Mrs. August Belmont.

This public-spirited citizen of the metropolis, once beloved by theatre-goers during a short but brilliant stage career as the gifted actress, Eleanor Robson, became equally popular after her marriage to the banker and sportsman, August Belmont, as a leader in the social life of New York and in great philanthropic undertakings such as the American Red Cross and the emergency welfare work for the unemployed that preceded the W. P. A. It was as a member of the board of directors of the Metropolitan Opera Company that Mrs. Belmont became aware of conditions that menaced the very existence of our one and only great opera company. When Giulio Gatti-Casazza, former impresario of the Metropolitan Opera Company, retired and returned to his native Italy, the time had come to reorganize an institution that boasts of a proud tradition but now faces new conditions. The death of Otto Kahn had removed one of the most munificent benefactors of the old régime. Increasing taxation hampered those who might have wished to take up his burdens. The board of directors set

about the task of reorganization under the able leadership of Paul Cravath. Under the leadership of charming Lucrezia Bori the artists of the Metropolitan through benefits and a concerted drive for funds raised a considerable sum of money.

The will of Augustus Juilliard had provided for a certain assistance to the Metropolitan Opera Company in case of need, and the Foundation that bears his name also came to the rescue as far as possible. But foundations share with the individual investor in stocks and bonds the grave uncertainties of the times, and the Juilliard Foundation had heavy existing commitments in the field of musical education. It could not undertake the complete task of supporting the Metropolitan Opera. Something more than temporary relief measures was needed.

Inspired by a desire to avert an immediate catastrophe and at the same time to build a strong foundation for the future, Mrs. Belmont conceived the idea of a Metropolitan Opera Guild, through which a certain measure of the responsibility for maintaining the opera would be transferred from a few individuals to a large body of interested citizens. As a member of her board of directors in the Guild it has been my privilege to observe the consummate skill with which she has carried out this idea. It is in tune with the collective tendencies of the age, and the membership of the Guild has increased by leaps and bounds. Even in other cities she has sought and found support from music-lovers who enjoy the radio broadcasts of Metropolitan Opera performances. Each member of the Guild makes a modest financial contribution and in return he enjoys certain privileges in connection with obtaining tickets for performances, as well as admittance to an occasional dress rehearsal, special information issued in magazine form, preparatory lectures, and contact with leading opera singers

at the public luncheons and parties that have become popular features of the New York winter season. Mrs. Herbert Witherspoon, widow of the eminent singer who had been appointed general manager of the Metropolitan Opera Company shortly before his untimely death, has done splendid executive and propaganda work for the Guild, and the clever pen of Mrs. John de Witt Peltz has made the Guild literature delightful as well as informative. The present manager of the Metropolitan Opera, Edward Johnson, once famous as a gifted and popular tenor but now equally successful as an impresario, has worked in close sympathy with the Guild, and what with the artistic strides of the Opera under his management and the increasing public interest and support aroused by the Guild, the future of the Metropolitan looks bright.

Inspired by Mrs. Belmont's example, a group of Philharmonic-Symphony supporters in New York have created a similar organization called the Philharmonic-Symphony League, for the purpose of defending the venerable orchestra—which is one of the three oldest symphonic bodies in the world—against the menace of hard times, vanishing millionaires and the somewhat frightening competition of the radio. Headed by the able and vivacious Mrs. Ruth Pratt, this new organization aims to make the New York Philharmonic-Symphony "our orchestra" to thousands of New Yorkers and suburban neighbors. It does not require a great effort of the imagination to visualize numerous Guilds and Leagues supporting musical enterprises throughout the country.

An important figure in professional musical life, whose existence has been threatened by changing conditions, is the local concert manager in cities throughout the country. The species is not extinct but it can no longer be depended upon as in the past.

Various people claim the invention of an idea that is already replacing his activities in many different cities, namely, the Community Concert Series. It is beyond my power to settle the question of these claims, but Arthur Judson has certainly developed the new possibility with a skill and a breadth of conception that is unequalled.

Unquestionably one of the leading musical managers of the day, Arthur Judson possesses something rarer than insight; he has *foresight*. Sensing the tendency of the age, he first proceeded to create a managerial coalition that all but controls the entire country. Instead of fighting among themselves, most important American musical managers are engaged in apparently peaceful concerted action under his leadership. The chief outcome of this joining of forces is the community concert.

The citizens of a town or city, inspired by an emissary of Mr. Judson and his partners, agree to raise a certain sum through an advance sale of tickets for a series of concerts. Gone are the gambler's risks of the pre-war local manager. The wherewithal to finance the concert course is assured before a single artist is engaged. For the amount of money the community has raised a corresponding concert course is arranged. If the subscription has been considerable, the most famous and popular artists are included; if not, the subscribers have to content themselves with less sensational performers.

The managerial coalition behind this development smacks a bit of monopoly and Mr. Judson's dominating personality lends a tinge of dictatorship to the movement, but it has proved to be an eminently practical way of restoring some sense of security to the American concert business. In these troubled times security in any form has its value, and it is probable that Mr. Judson will

appear in the pages of musical history in the light of a savior rather than in that of a dictator. Certain it is that no one else in his field has displayed the vision, the understanding of changing conditions and the qualities of leadership that have given him his present position.

It is interesting for an artist who has been under the management of two great managers in the history of the musical profession in the United States, Charles Ellis before the World War and Arthur Judson after it, to note the differences of character and personality that have enabled each of them to take a dominant place under widely different conditions. Ellis, a born conservative, was primarily interested in a single orchestra and a very few individual artists. Fastidious and cautious by nature, he chose his artists with care, but once they were under his management his intense belief in them was infectious and undoubtedly communicated itself to others, thereby creating or greatly enhancing their prestige. His career was built up on the basis of the largest possible business for the fewest possible artists. He made no effort to organize the world.

Arthur Judson, adventurous, imaginative, and a prodigious worker, thinks in terms of managerial empire-building. He has managed the Philadelphia Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra and the Cincinnati Orchestra. Indeed, through his personal management of conductors he has had a finger in the pie of most major orchestras in the United States. Through his success in the placing of conductors he has become the king-maker of the orchestral world, and every aspirant for the career of orchestra conductor seeks a contract with Arthur Judson. He also touches the radio field through his connection with the Columbia Broadcasting Company.



The sheer scope of his activities and business connections makes him much more objective about his artists than Ellis was. I think Ellis would have died rather than reveal an Achilles-heel weakness in one of his artists, but I have heard Arthur Judson discuss musicians on his managerial list with a frankly critical objectivity. Not that Judson is cold-blooded or incapable of personal friendship for his artists, but his managerial projects are so vast that he could no more summon the concentrated enthusiasm of an Ellis for a half-dozen individuals than Mussolini, for all his theoretical love of the bambino, could conjure up a burning personal interest in every Italian baby. Judson belongs to the age of collectivity, of coalitions and community concerts, of managerial "big business." If he were not so constituted, he could never cope with the present situation. Ellis, sensing the changes that were taking place and being unfitted for them by nature, retired many years before his death.

The characteristic qualities of outstanding men must fit them for their part in life, but it is sometimes difficult to determine how much the conditions of their special field of activity are created by their will and purpose, or how much they themselves are directed by forces over which they have no control. Judson calls Ellis "the greatest manager America ever produced." With all due respect for this refreshing modesty and despite my admiration for Ellis, I am inclined to believe that Judson himself will ultimately exercise the greater influence upon the future of music in the United States.

As this book goes to press a new musical development of incalculable importance and far-reaching possibilities appears on the horizon.

When I visited the Frankfurt Music Exhibition in 1927, I first became acquainted with the Theremin instruments, the first important attempt in the direction of electrically-produced tone. Since then great strides have been made in perfecting such sound-producing agencies. Leopold Stokowski has been working in this field for four years and now has an orchestra of varied electric instruments with which he intends to give concerts in the near future. The instruments will necessitate a new notation and new orchestration, but Stokowski believes the essence of the music played will be not only preserved but enhanced. A world tour is in prospect and it will undoubtedly make musical history.

Among the reasons which led to Stokowski's decision to devote himself to research and evolve such an orchestra was the refusal of the Philadelphia Orchestra board of directors in the past to allow the orchestra to tour Europe under his direction. Even when Edward Bok offered to finance such a tour, Stokowski's strong wish met with refusal. Now modern scientific developments will enable him to give his concerts wherever he likes with an orchestra of nineteen musicians, and tour the Americas, Europe, Africa and part of Asia without the prohibitive expense of a regular symphony orchestra.

Stokowski may well encounter strong opposition from musical reactionaries, but open-minded musicians who know him best realize that he would not devote his art to an unworthy medium. He believes that the electric orchestra and the existing type of symphony orchestra will exist side by side.

Only the largest cities can now afford to maintain symphony orchestras of a hundred players, and most organizations of this kind face a huge yearly deficit. If the smaller electric orchestra

proves its worth, symphonic music will be possible in communities of almost any size, thus providing for innumerable cities and towns the experience of musical performance by living musicians and, incidentally, providing a greatly increased professional field for conductors and players. The imagination runs riot in considering the possibilities of the new development. There are dangers, too, but in these days we are accustomed to perils in every direction.

Some ages are peaceful and contemplative. Mankind then settles down to enjoy an established order of things. Those of us who can remember pre-war days had a taste of such an era, although it was nearing its end and disquieting presages of approaching changes were already perceptible. Personally, I do not regret that the most important part of my life has taken place in the midst of profound upheavals. We are living in an uncomfortable age, but one that is creative and vital. In every field of human life and human endeavor there is work to be done—creative work of absorbing interest. The human being who is individualistic to the point of being uninterested in anything outside of himself may be very unhappy in such an age, but those who can feel the great surging currents of human aspirations, or sense compassionately the needs on every side that render each service to humanity or to the arts and the sciences doubly valuable, can find a real meaning in life. It is something to be able to feel there is a reason for being alive.

As I realize how many of the people and things of which I have written in this book are still part of professional musical life and of my own existence, I am convinced that memoirs should be written, if at all, while the author is still in the midst of active life.

Only then can our impressions and reactions be completely fresh and alive, unclouded by that chill mist enshrouding things that no longer matter.

Destiny is a big word, and no mortal knows whether or not any of it is preordained. Neither ardent faith nor intellectual speculation can penetrate the mystery of the future. But as I have observed the profound changes that have taken place in the musical life of my time, it has often seemed to me as though each of us—no matter what the circumstances of our existence may be—sits at a loom fashioned to do its share in the weaving of fate. Some mortal weavers only obstruct with snarled or broken threads; others sit idle while their neighbors spin; but the highest inspiration of a willing worker at the loom comes when, sensing a plan and purpose behind the actions of men, he is able to trace in the developments and trends he perceives, the outline of a great unfolding pattern of human destiny.







UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY



136 241

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY